

**Re/producing the Nation:
Women Making Identity in New Zealand,
1906-1925**

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CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES.....iii

ABSTRACT.....iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

CHAPTER ONE 1

Introduction

CHAPTER TWO 40

Setting the scene

CHAPTER THREE..... 53

“No nation rises higher than its women”: 1906-1914

CHAPTER FOUR..... 80

In defence of nation and empire: 1914-1918

CHAPTER FIVE..... 107

“Our raw product is girls; our intention is to make better girls”: 1918-1925

CHAPTER SIX 143

Conclusion

BIBLIOGRAPHY 154

TABLE OF FIGURES.

Figure 1. “A Fine Family Record”	101
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ABSTRACT

In the period 1906-1925, several women's organisations offered an interpretation of political life that emphasised the role of women as maternal citizens and saviours of the "race". Through an examination of the activities of eight women's organisations, it is argued that women were active participants in the construction of the New Zealand nation. By abandoning traditional androcentric definitions of the "political", it is demonstrated how women during this period worked to extend the "private" sphere of the home into the community, and ultimately the nation. As social purists, war time voluntary workers, instructors of young women, and as mothers, New Zealand women were crucial to constructed national identities. Through emphasising traditional maternal functions, such as care and nurture, women could, and did, negotiate a place for themselves in the New Zealand nation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1906 the National Council of Women began a recess that was to last beyond World War I until 1922. It has been argued that the loss of the Council from the wider women's movement landscape resulted in a cessation of women's campaign for political reform. Instead, it was to the provision of welfare for women and children that the women's organisations turned their attention.¹ This thesis examines eight women's organisations active from 1906 to 1925, including the reconstituted Council itself, and argues that, although the women themselves were not always consciously aware of it, the campaign for "political reform" was very much alive within these women's organisations. The women's organisations worked to extend traditional perceptions of femininity, from the "private" sphere of the home, into the "public" sphere of the community. While these traditional Victorian constructions of femininity were limiting to women on the one hand, they also provided a way for women to erode male power and dominance in society by claiming that they were working for the betterment of the "race"² and the nation through the implementation of accepted womanly attributes: as

¹See for example: C.Macdonald, *The Vote the Pill and the Demon Drink: A History of Feminist Writing in New Zealand, 1869-1993*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1993, p.68. See also for detail on the history of the early National Council of Women and the collapse of the early council: D.Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History*, Auckland, Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996; R.Nicholls. *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920*, Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1996; R. Nicholls, "The Collapse of the Early National Council of Women of New Zealand, 1896-1906", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.27, No.2, 1993.

² This term is used throughout the thesis with the understanding that "race" is always a social construction.

upholders of morality and social purity.³ This extension of the role of women allowed them to be active participants in the construction of the New Zealand nation.

The interpretation of the “political” that these women’s organisations offered, emphasised the role of women as maternal citizens and supposed saviours of the race. Central to the examination of the organisations in this thesis is a renewed look at the “political.” The idea of “politics” as something that only occurs at the highest level of government needs to be abandoned and replaced with a definition that recognises the activities of groups that work toward affecting the course of behaviour of the government or the community, such as the women’s organisations in this thesis. This is a project recently started in New Zealand women’s history. In her recent examination of the activities of the National Council of Women, Dorothy Page has moved toward “a redefinition of politics in New Zealand history.”⁴ It is within this framework of a reconsideration of politics that this thesis will examine the work and activities of several women’s organisations.

The organisations that this thesis will examine are: the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association); the Mothers’ Union; the Girls’ Friendly Society; the Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides Association; the Society for the Protection of Women and Children; the National Council of Women; the Canterbury Women’s Institute; and the Otago Women’s Patriotic Association. At first glance this collection of women’s organisations seem a diverse and unconnected grouping. These organisations, however, all share their work to construct girls and women, who were of improved moral and

³ K.Spearritt, “New Dawns: First Wave Feminism 1880-1914”, in K.Saunders and R.Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

⁴K.Pickles, “Review: My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates: The unsettled lives of women in nineteenth century New Zealand as revealed to sisters, family and friends and The National Council of Women: A Centennial History”, *History Now*, Vol.3, No.1, May 1997, p.47.

physical health and fitness, for the task of motherhood. Within this collection of organisations it is possible to create sub-groups. Both the Mothers' Union and the Girls' Friendly Society were organisations that were imported from England in the 1880s and were Anglican Church based organisations. It is possible, however, to group the Girls' Friendly Society with the YWCA, and the Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides Association, as organisations that were committed to the instruction of young women. On the other hand, the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Mothers' Union, the National Council of Women and the Canterbury Women's Institute were more concerned with campaigning for legislative and moral reform.

The organisations were not united on the methods to achieve the purification and transformation of society. Whereas organisations such as the W.C.T.U and the Canterbury Women's Institute believed that purification was to be achieved by explicit "political" activities, ~~but~~ the Mothers' Union was not in agreement. In a study of United States women's organisations Karen Blair has argued that many middle and upper class women were not willing to "scandalise their kin by clamouring for electoral power,"⁵ and this would seem to be the case with Mothers' Union. In June of 1895 the Christchurch Diocesan executive received a petition from the Women's Institute relating to the issues of old age pensions, women sitting in the house of representatives and having full rights of citizenship with men, and laws relating to marriage, divorce, and the Criminal Code Acts. After discussion on the first two of the nine points of the petition, it was decided that the "questions of the Women's Institute were too large to be dealt with by the Mothers' Union".⁶ The "politics" with which this organisation chose to

⁵K.Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined 1868-1914*, New York, Holmes and Meier, 1980, p.3.

⁶Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1894-1903, 6 July 1895.

concern itself was directly related to women and their rights and responsibilities as mothers.⁷ All of the women's organisations examined in this thesis were engaged in political activity that was crucial to the creation of the nation, but the methods employed by these organisations differed.

A NATION FOR WHOM?

The work of the organisations was largely concerned with the moral purification of society, and the construction of physically and technically prepared women to fulfil the role of motherhood. Organising bodies were largely comprised of middle class women who sought to improve the lot of working class women. In the case of the Anglican church based Mothers' Union and Girls' Friendly Society, it was clergy wives who took prominent roles in the organisations.⁸ In the non-denominational organisations such as the Girl Guides Association it was women of the leisured middle classes such as Cecilia O'Rourke and Miss Cracroft-Wilson who were instrumental in the organisation's establishment and continuation.⁹ These middle class organisers very often fitted into the category of the "postmaternal woman"¹⁰, a mother who after having

⁷This was reflected in the stated object of the organisation: "The object of this union is to awaken in mothers of their great responsibility, as mothers, in the training of their boys and girls, who will be the future fathers and mothers of New Zealand...and seek by their own example to lead their families in purity and holiness of life." Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1894-1903, 7 April 1894.

⁸For example: The Vice Presidency of the Christchurch Diocesan Mothers' Union was held by Mrs Julius, wife of Bishop Julius, Christchurch Diocese: Mothers' Union Diocesan Minutes, 1894-1903, and 1903-1912. In the case of the Girls' Friendly Society the Holy Trinity, Avonside, branch serves as an example. The meetings were held in the vicarage and were chaired by the vicar's wife Mrs Pascoe, Holy Trinity Church, Avonside, Anglican Records, 2 Arch 15, Girls' Friendly Society, Secretary's Book, Minutes 1896-1921.

⁹O'Rourke was "well connected" and enjoyed the hospitality of the prominent Canterbury Heaton Rhodes family during her stay in the province. Likewise Miss Cracroft-Wilson was a member of the prominent family of the province.

¹⁰M.Morganroth Gullette, "Inventing the "Postmaternal" Woman, 1898-1927: Idle, Unwanted, and Out of a Job", *Feminist Studies*, Vol.21, No.2, Summer 1995.

stayed home to raise her children, had come to the “end” of her childrearing years, but, according to Gullette, still had many years of “surplus life to fill”.¹¹ For many of these middle class women, voluntary work in women’s organisations such as those covered in this thesis, provided a place to give meaning their years of “surplus life”.

Organisers often expressed the class base of membership in negative terms. Both the Mothers’ Union and the Girl Peace Scouts were concerned that their organisations were only being utilised by women and girls of the working classes. In 1902 the Mothers’ Union mooted the idea that drawing room meetings be held in an attempt to secure the membership of educated and middle class women.¹² It would seem that this was not an effective solution, as in 1910 the same concerns were once again articulated, and the idea of drawing room meetings once again advanced.¹³

The Girl Guides did see its duty as being mainly being to children of “poorer homes”, but was eager that the class base of the Association would spread so that “every sort of child” could receive the “jolly wholesome activity and training” in his or her spare time.¹⁴ In 1919, when the Girl Guides were trying to establish their organisation in New Zealand, the comment was made that there were no Girl Peace Scout Groups in “good girls’ schools”.¹⁵ It was an expressed hope that no one would labour under the mistaken idea that Peace Scouting was a means to “help just the poor girl”, and that girls

¹¹Ibid,p.221.

¹²14 June 1902, Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1894-1903.

¹³23 March 1910, Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1903-1912. The drawing room represented a socially acceptable space for women of the middle and upper classes. The choice of “drawing rooms” for these meetings demonstrates the class element of this membership appeal,

¹⁴Olave Baden Powell to Miss Hodge, 21 July 1920, Girl Guides Association Records, ATL, 88-130-03/1.

¹⁵Cecilia O'Rourke to Olave Baden Powell, 4 December 1919, Girl Guides Association Records, ATL, 88-130-03/1.

of the middle classes would become involved in the organisation “in order that their good influence may be spread among girls who are not so fortunate”.¹⁶

It was the sons and daughters of the “less responsible” working classes who the women’s organisations believed to be the most in need of supervision.¹⁷ In the late nineteenth century the term “working class” came to be a moral judgement rather than a mere description. For these women’s organisations, to a certain degree, class became synonymous with laziness, profligacy and weakness of character.¹⁸ Many of the middle class reformers of the women’s organisations believed that the homes of the working classes resulted in working class girls having a “harder row to hoe” than their middle class contemporaries. A stereotype emerged of a disorderly and squalid working class home, lacking in parental guidance. There was a belief that cramped living quarters led to incest and other disastrous consequences.¹⁹ This view was expressed by the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, who stated in 1899, that overcrowding of housing was a “fruitful cause of immorality”.²⁰

This thesis is primarily about Pakeha women and their place in the New Zealand nation. The nation that the Pakeha women’s organisations were intent on negotiating a place within was far removed from the more immediate concerns of Maori women. The women involved at the organisational level of these organisations were almost

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷M.Tennant, *Children’s Health the Nation’s Wealth: A History of Children’s Health Camps*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1994, p.16.

¹⁸S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland*, Auckland, YWCA, 1986, p.44.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Wellington Branch, Annual Report 1899, p.7, ATL, MS-Group-180, MSX 3292.

exclusively Pakeha women. So too were the young women who these organisations were trying to reach. There were, however, some attempts by women's organisations to reform Maori women, but cultural differences and Maori women's own reform agenda meant that this work only achieved limited success. The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union), and the Mothers' Union²¹ were the most notable of the organisations under examination to make attempts at the reformation of Maori women. From 1894 Maori branches of the WCTU were formed. These groups, organised by Pakeha women, had a large emphasis on social purity issues such as abuse of alcohol and smoking. Maori women were encouraged to take the pledge, but they were required to give up more than alcohol if they did so. By signing they were also committed to discontinue the practice of moko, the tradition of body decoration symbolising rank.²² Even when some Maori women did take the pledge it was for reasons other than the WCTU had anticipated. Florance Harsant, a Pakeha woman, worked as a Maori organiser for the WCTU. For over twelve months during 1913 and 1914 she travelled around Maori communities in the North Island in an effort to form temperance unions. On one occasion Harsant left a meeting feeling that she had been successful as all of the women present had joined the union. She returned to the area two weeks later and was astonished to find these women drunk. On asking the women why they had joined the

²¹A.Else, *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, p.154, The Mothers' Union had Maori members of some branches.

²²T.Rei, *Maori Women and the Vote*, Wellington, Huia, 1993, p.40. This requirement was in line with British feminist reformers the Empire over. All throughout the Empire white women reformers were calling for the end to traditional practices by arguing that they were unhygienic, and placed the indigenous women in danger. The argument was no different in New Zealand, the WCTU argued that the customary practise could lead to blood poisoning and ultimately death. For a discussion of this see: M.Strobel, "Gender and Race in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Empire", in R.Bridenthal, C.Koonz and S.Stuard (Eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 2nd Edition, Boston, Houghton, 1987, p.390.

union, they responded that they only signed up because they liked her, and wanted to send her away with a happy heart.²³

In addition to social purity issues, the WCTU was also concerned with improving the health of Maori women and instructing them in the ways of motherhood. Florance Harsant's work was not confined to temperance issues alone. In a letter written in 1982 she stated that she not only formed temperance unions "but taught the proper care of infants, sanitation, and cleanliness wherever I went."²⁴ In the mind of Florance Harsant there was a clear connection between physical and moral health. After a successful meeting at which a large union was formed, Harsant notes to herself that the formation of the union was "especially gratifying, in view of all the sickness...the typhoid epidemic is causing".²⁵ In 1915, after her travels were forced to end due to ill health, she was requested by Harold Holland M.P, to write a pamphlet in Maori on childcare, and the preparation of food for infants. These pamphlets were distributed amongst the Maori unions.²⁶ Harsant's work and Holland's request demonstrates that there was a desire on the part of the government and the WCTU alike that Maori women were versed in the new methods of motherhood that would ultimately lead to lower mortality rates for Maori.

The efforts and activities of the women in the WCTU need to be re-read in light of the emerging 'women and imperialism' literature. Works such as Claudia Knapman's *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire?* and Helen Callaway's *Gender*,

²³Florance Harsant, "My Everyday Life as Travelling Organiser for Maori Women on behalf of the WCTU", 1913, p.18, MS-0938.

²⁴Florance Harsant to Mediawomen Incorp, 10 June 1982, Florance Harsant papers, ATL, MS-Group 246.

²⁵Manuscript, Florance Harsant papers, MS-Group 246, p.149.

²⁶Ibid, p.193.

*Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*²⁷, opposed the traditional treatment of white women within the colonial historiography. Both of these works critique the earlier representations of white women in masculinist colonial histories, and develop a woman centred reappraisal. The more recent works in this area have moved from the Knapman and Callaway's position of recovery and celebration of 'white' women's role in the colonial project, to problematizing the role of women in the colonial project.

Recent developments in women's history, feminist theory, and women's studies have led to an examination and evaluation of white women's role in imperialism as well as other forms of class and cultural exploitation.²⁸ Instead of the traditional representation of "colonial women" as "intrepid travellers, pioneers, and missionaries"²⁹, women are now being viewed as participants in British expansion. Like the men, British women are now seen as benefiting from "the economic and political subjugation of indigenous people". They also shared many of the "accompanying attitudes of racism, paternalism, ethnocentrism, and national chauvinism".³⁰ The privileges of race often placed white women in positions of power over both colonised men and women. White women are no longer seen as "the hapless onlookers of empire",

²⁷C.Knapman, *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire?*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1986, and H.Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1987.

²⁸N.Chaudhuri and M.Strobel, "Introduction" in N.Chaudhuri and M.Strobel (Eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.9.

²⁹V.Ware, "Moments of danger: Race, Gender, and Memories of Empire" *History and Theory*, Vol.31, no.4, 1992, p.121.

³⁰M. Strobel, "Gender and Race in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Empire", in R.Bridenthal et al (Eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 2nd Edition, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987, p.376.

instead there is a recognition they were “ambiguously complicit both as colonisers and colonised, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting”.³¹

White women, such as the reformers in the WCTU, did not have the necessity to either describe themselves as or view themselves as “being white”. Through their relationship to the dominant culture they were allowed to feel part of a superior racial and cultural group without ever having to explicitly voice a white supremacist position.³² They, in Catherine Hall’s words, held “a confident assumption...that Englishness [or whiteness] represented the norm”, and that “everyone else was striving to become like us”.³³ Excluded from many of what have been traditionally recognised as the instruments of imperialism and colonisation, such as the military and the bureaucracy, women also played a key part in colonisation. Through their roles as teachers and reformers white women helped legitimise colonisation. They also served to indoctrinate indigenous women into Victorian notions of domesticity. It was through white women that the transmission of conventional European gender roles took place.³⁴ Strobel cites an example from post World War II Kenya of female white settlers organising classes in homecraft and sewing for the African women³⁵. In New Zealand the Maori Women’s Institute, formed in 1929, provided rural Pakeha women with an

³¹A.McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p.6.

³²Ware, p.127.

³³C.Hall, “‘From Greenland’s Icy Mountains...to Africa’s Golden Sand’: Ethnicity, Race and Nation in Mid-Nineteenth Century England”, *Gender and History*, Vol.5, No.2, Summer, 1993, p.215.

³⁴Strobel,pp.376-377.

³⁵Ibid,p.389.

opportunity to teach Maori women such skills as knitting, crochet, and embroidery³⁶, and thus foster eurocentric domestic virtues.

Several writers have identified the work of white women with indigenous women as falling within a maternal role. It is this identification that has led Barbara Ramusack to label British women activists working in India as maternal imperialists.³⁷ Similarly, Margaret Jolly accords the maternal body a central position in her examination of the relationship between 'white' and indigenous women. Jolly argues that many of the white women believed that they should guide indigenous women as if they were their own children. This mode of conceptualising the relationship is not, however, a simple substitution of a female-centred maternalism, for the old male-centred paternalism. The relationship in maternalism, that of mother-daughter, is vastly different to the relationship commonly imagined in a relationship with white man as father and black man as son. The difference lies in the way in which the categories of race, class and gender intersect differently for men and women. For white men in the colonial setting the "terms of hierarchical subordination" were all in alignment: their race, class, and gender were all constitutive elements in their power position as "father". For white women, however, their race and class intersected to create their power, but their gender did not.³⁸ Their gender did however ascribe them a maternal role.

³⁶Else,p.8.

³⁷B.Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945", in N.Chaudhuri and M.Strobel (Eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.133.

³⁸M.Jolly, "Colonizing women: The maternal body and the empire", in S.Gunew and A.Yeatman (Eds.), *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, New South Wales, Allen and Unwin, 1993, pp.112-115.

From their position as maternal figures Pakeha women set about reforming Maori women in New Zealand. The work of organisations such as the WCTU was premised on the belief that Pakeha women knew best. Meanwhile, for Maori women the issue of temperance was not an issue that was accorded top priority. The women of the komiti wahine of the Kotahitanga movement certainly saw alcohol abuse as a cause for concern³⁹, but rather than temperance and moral reform, the first concerns of Maori women were to find solutions to the material and political problems that faced their people. Evidence for this can be taken from the issues that the women of the komiti wahine did debate. At a hui at Te Hauke in 1895 the women debated the following issues: that the Native Land Court should be abolished; that land sales should end, that the surveying of Maori land should cease, that Maori who persisted in leasing and mortgaging the lands of the people and making use of the Native Land Court should be fined by the Kotahitanga parliament, and that all should sign the Kotahitanga deeds and pay one pound per annum for the support of the Kotahitanga parliament and its works.⁴⁰ These issues were far removed from the concerns of the women's organisations of this thesis.

Antoinette Burton has examined the relationship between British feminists and Indian women in the period 1865 to 1915. She argues that many British feminists viewed the women of the East not as equals but as unfortunates in need of saving by

³⁹For example, the women's committee of Heretaunga adopted a resolution that women should stop drinking spirits, cited in A.Ballara, "Wahine Rangatira: Maori Women of Rank and their Role in the Women's Kotahitanga Movement of the 1890s", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.27, No.2, 1993, p.129.

⁴⁰Ibid,pp.128-129.

their British “sisters”.⁴¹ This attitude led the British women to create the Indian women as passive colonial subjects rather than recognise that Indian women were active in social reform and feminist causes of their own making in this period.⁴² This argument does much to illuminate the New Zealand situation. The WCTU attempted to impose their own reform agenda on a group of women who already had their own agenda. Not only were Maori women working to stop the sale of Maori land in this period, they were also working to raise the position of Maori women within Maoridom. In 1893 a petition was put before the Kotahitanga, by Meri Mangakahia of Te Rarawa, seeking voting rights for women, and the right to sit in this parliament.⁴³ In 1897 Maori women won the right to both vote and stand for their parliament⁴⁴, however it was not until 1919 that battle for women to sit in the national parliament was won.

THE MASCULINE NATION

The nation that the women’s organisations were vying for a place in was not only race specific, but also relied on powerful constructions of gender. As is the case with all nationalisms, New Zealand women were denied any direct relation to national agency. Instead they appeared as symbolic representatives of the nation.⁴⁵ The obvious example of this is the figure of Britannia, but New Zealand has its own example in

⁴¹A.Burton, “The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and “The Indian Woman”, 1865-1915”, in N.Chaudhuri and M.Strobel (Eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, p.137.

⁴²Ibid,p.151.

⁴³S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*,p.284.

⁴⁴Rei,p.21.

⁴⁵ McClintock, pp.352-354.

Zealandia, the link to “mother” Britain, and the symbolic mother of New Zealand, receiving official recognition through her inclusion in the coat of arms.⁴⁶

It is men who have been the subjects of nation and identity in New Zealand; it is men who have appeared as cultural representatives around which New Zealanders have come to imagine a shared experience of identification. Frontier experience, so a myth of national identity tells us, produced a “type” that revelled in reckless behaviour. The hard-drinking, crude-talking, roving, frontier man has been credited in the national story with breaking in the land. Attributes of the frontier, such as the ability to improvise, or be “a jack of all trades”, came to be seen as a term of unqualified approval.⁴⁷ From the 1890s the frontier and pioneer experiences, and their associated attributes, were elevated to the status of legend⁴⁸, and transformed into foci for identity building. Construction of such legends was a way for the colonists to assert their “national difference”, and distinguish themselves from those in the “mother country”.

With the South African war another male image joined the image of the frontier man and the pioneer as representatives of New Zealand’s identity; the legend began to form of the physically superior soldier. On the eve of the Dunedin troops’ departure, Premier Seddon described them “as fine a body of men, wonderfully even as to size, and as perfect in physique as it falls to the lot of the most favoured of our race to be”.⁴⁹ Once in South Africa the legend gathered even more momentum with comments such as those that appeared in the *Evening Post* from an English officer: “These colonial troops

⁴⁶R. Wolfe, “Zealandia Mother of the Nation”, *New Zealand Geographic*, No.23, July 1994, pp.97,102.

⁴⁷ J.O.C. J. Phillips, *A Man’s Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1987, p.18

⁴⁸*Ibid*, p.39.

⁴⁹J.J. Phillips, “Rugby, War and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.18, No.2, October 1984, p.85.

are a splendid body...I don't suppose there is a man under six feet, and I should say quite half of them go up to 6 ft. 4in. or 5 in."⁵⁰ The legend of the New Zealand soldier may have begun to take shape on the veldt of South Africa, but it was on the beaches of Gallipoli that this legend was codified. The national mythology of New Zealand holds that national consciousness, and through that the nation, was born at Gallipoli.⁵¹

Traditional historical interpretations, such as those offered by Sinclair and McIntyre, may situate the starting point of the path to New Zealand's nationhood in the 1860s and 1870s, with the control and subsequent imperial withdrawal of troops during the land wars, but view the culmination of our identity building process as being World War I.⁵² New Zealand's path to nationhood has been, according to McIntyre, a long, peaceful, and often subtle process. Unlike the French or the Americans, there has been no point in our history that we can point to and call the definitive moment of our nationhood.⁵³ Instead what we have is a constructed path to nationhood that is littered with the bodies and achievements of men. Along the linear path, moments such as the "brave" performance in the South African war are highlighted, but the highpoint of our search for identity is identified as "The Great War". According to McIntyre, New Zealand emerged from this war with "an enhanced identity and a new status".⁵⁴

⁵⁰This was not the case, in fact the average height of the first contingent was 5 ft. 9 in. Ibid.

⁵¹J.Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, p.163.

⁵²K. Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin, 1986; and W.David McIntyre, "Imperialism and Nationalism", in G.W.Rice (Ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.337-447. Writing some time after Sinclair, McIntyre draws much from the arguments of Sinclair.

⁵³McIntyre,p.337.

⁵⁴Ibid, p.345.

In addition to asserting an identity to differentiate itself from Britain, New Zealanders also developed a desire to differentiate themselves from their larger Tasman neighbour: Australia. Prior to 1901 it was natural to talk of Australasia as a whole.⁵⁵ The inhabitants of the seven colonies had a common colonial experience, similar institutions, common status as British subjects and complete freedom of inter-migration. In many ways to conceptualise two different peoples would have been absurd.⁵⁶ The desire for differentiation developed against the backdrop of the need for a final decision on whether or not to federate with the six Australian states in 1901.⁵⁷ The central concern that most New Zealanders had with such a union was that they would lose their independence.⁵⁸ Not only did New Zealand ultimately decide to stay out of the federation, but it also sought to construct an identity away from that of Australia. In order to do this the image of New Zealand's distinctiveness lying in its progressive legislation was invoked.⁵⁹ New Zealand also began to promote its race relations as a point of departure from its neighbour. Maori were portrayed as a "superior breed" to Aborigines, and New Zealand as a country that could congratulate itself on its altruistic treatment of its indigenous people.⁶⁰ The desire on New Zealand's part to differentiate

⁵⁵K. Sinclair, *The Native Born: The Origins of New Zealand Nationalism*, Massey University, Massey Memorial Lecture, Occasional Publications, No.8, 1986, p.6.

⁵⁶R.Arnold, "The Australasian Peoples and their World, 1888-1915", in K.Sinclair (Ed.), *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1987, p.52.

⁵⁷F.L.W.Wood, "Why did New Zealand not join the Australian Commonwealth in 1900-1901?", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.2, No.2, October 1968, p.115.

⁵⁸K.Sinclair, *The Native Born: The Origins of New Zealand Nationalism*, Massey University, Massey Memorial Lecture, Occasional Publications No.8, 1986, p.7.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰K.Sinclair, "The Beginnings of a Colonial Nationalism: Richard Jebb in New Zealand, 1899", in J.Eddy and D.Schreuder (Eds.), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1985, p.114.

itself began to take on superior tones; New Zealanders began to point to the fact that they were more genteel and lacked the convict stain of Australia.⁶¹

The two countries found a further point of differentiation in the issue of Imperialism. A potent force in the constructed Australian national identity in the late 1880s and early 1890s, was a radical republicanism.⁶² Meanwhile, on the other side of the Tasman, New Zealand had gained a reputation for being especially loyal to the Empire.⁶³ Sinclair and McIntyre, argue that imperialism and nationalism were heavily interwoven in the New Zealand case.⁶⁴ Within this seemingly paradoxical situation New Zealand found ways to assert its individual identity. The Imperial ideology found expression through many outlets. The establishment of the *New Zealand School Journal* in 1907⁶⁵, and the military drill for boys at school,⁶⁶ were two examples of this.

FEMINIST HISTORY AND THE CHALLENGE TO THE MASCULINE NATION

When historians have come to consider the question of national identity in New Zealand, the work of the women and their organisations have been excluded from such considerations. Writing in the 1980s, Sinclair argued that New Zealand nationalism was

⁶¹ Ibid, p.125.

⁶² C.S.Blackton, "Australian Nationality and Nationalism, 1850-1900", *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, Vol.9, No.36, May 1961, p.351.

⁶³ Sinclair, *The Native Born*, p.9.

⁶⁴ Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*; and McIntyre.

⁶⁵ E.P.Malone, "The New Zealand School Journal and The Imperial Ideology", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.7, No.1, April 1973.

⁶⁶ C.McGeorge, "The Moral curriculum: Forming the Kiwi Character", in G.McCulloch (Ed.), *The School Curriculum in New Zealand: History, Theory, Policy and Practice*, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, 1992, pp.47-48. Although the *Education Act 1877* required military drill it was largely ignored until after the South African War.

male-orientated was an historical inevitability. as, the demographic dominance of men in nineteenth century New Zealand, and the events that first stimulated strong national feeling “concerned men more immediately than women”: international sport and imperial war”.⁶⁷ Sinclair does show the presence of women in this male defined notion of the New Zealand nation, but this inclusion of women into the narrative of the nation often necessitated the construction of certain women as “honorary men”. An example of this is wartime nurses who Sinclair describes as “the women’s group that fitted best into the men’s world;...they, too, shared in the hardships and dangers of war”.⁶⁸

In his writing Sinclair, does not challenge the masculine construction of the nation. While fitting women into this narrow perception of national identity may allow for the emergence of some individual women and their achievements, it allows the masculine defined spaces of nation-building such as sport and war to remain, and in many ways be strengthened, as the sites of nation-building. The established patterns of historical significance, long imprinted on the New Zealand historiography, remain largely intact.⁶⁹ This is the type of history that Gerda Lerner labelled “contribution history”.⁷⁰ Furthermore such a strategy allows the category of *woman* to remain unproblematised. The women that Sinclair includes in his considerations of the nation

⁶⁷K.Sinclair, *The Native Born*, p.11.

⁶⁸K.Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, p211.

⁶⁹K.Saunders and R.Evans, “Introduction”, in K.Saunders and R.Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, New South Wales, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p.xviii.

⁷⁰G.Lerner, “Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective”, in B.A.Carroll (Ed.), *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1976.

are largely white and middle class. As Valverde has noted the intertwining of race, and class with gender is important in considerations of the process of nation-building.⁷¹

Within the New Zealand historiography the only work that explicitly sets out to explore “gender and the nation” is that of Jock Phillips.⁷² *A Man's Country*, considers who and what has “become identified with the process of national definition”.⁷³ Like the traditional histories of the nation, in Phillips’ work it is still largely men who are identified with the process of national definition. In the preface to this work, Phillips states that there can be few nations that have so single-mindedly defined themselves through male heroes.⁷⁴

The transition from “women’s history” to “gender history” has meant that women and men are now being considered as socially constructed individuals. However, the danger with histories of masculinities, as I see it, is that men are once again being placed at the centre of considerations. By Phillips’ own admission the “intellectual framework [for *A Man's Country*?] was set by feminist scholarship”.⁷⁵ It is somewhat of an irony that feminist theory and historical methodology is now being used to re-centre men as the central figure in the “story of the nation”. Marilyn Lake, although one of the first to call for the problematisation of masculinity in Australian

⁷¹M.Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1991, p.16.

⁷²“Rugby, War, and the Mythology of the New Zealand Male”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.18, No.2, October 1984. *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1987. “75 Years Since Gallipoli” in D.Green (Ed.), *Towards 1990*, Wellington, Government Printing Office, 1990. “War and National Identity” in D.Novitz and B.Willmott (Eds.), *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Wellington, GP Books, 1989.

⁷³J.J.Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, p.vii.

⁷⁴Ibid,p.vii.

⁷⁵Ibid,p.290.

history⁷⁶, has since sounded a warning on the dangers of “gender history”. She states that by changing the name to “gender” studies or history, women could disappear again, and that men could once again take centre place in the story.⁷⁷ With the result being that men and their experiences are still used to explain the “creation of the nation”, albeit in a re-cast way.⁷⁸

What is an effective way to study the gendered relationship between women and the nation? An examination of the everyday spaces and activities of women provides us with an alternative. It is through such an approach that the “domestic” experience of women can be used to examine the creation of the nation. For scholars involved in examining the gendered dynamics of colonialism, women’s domestic experiences are seen as integral to this project.⁷⁹ The cult of domesticity is being recast as something that was not “simply a trivial and fleeting irrelevance”, but “a crucial if concealed” dimension of the imperial enterprise.⁸⁰ The traditional sources that are employed in histories that examine the construction of nations, such as parliamentary records, treaties, and public speeches, do not inform an enquiry that seeks to find the role of women in the process of nation-building. These formal documents are concerned with areas of “high” politics from which women were excluded. Instead we must turn our attention to alternative spaces and sources, such as the records of women’s

⁷⁶M.Lake, “The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context”, *Historical Studies*, Vol.22, No.86, April 1986.

⁷⁷quoted in K.Saunders and R.Evans, p.xx.

⁷⁸see: P.Grimshaw,M.Lake,A.McGrath,M.Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin Books, 1994. This Australian work sets out to explicitly challenge the idea of an exclusively male experience being used to explain the creation of the nation.

⁷⁹K.Pickles, “Exhibiting Canada: Empire, Migration and the 1928 Schoolgirl Tour”, forthcoming, 1997, p.2.

⁸⁰McClintock,p.5.

organisations, to examine the relationship between women's domestic experience and the creation of the nation.

It is through abandoning the dichotomy of the "public" and the "private" that we can begin to use women's organisations as a way to study the role of women in the process of nation-building. It is through such an examination that the everyday domestic experiences of women can be revealed, and then used to show how they were integral to the creation of the nation. In an enquiry that employs feminist history and theory this means that the narrow, male-centred definition of politics and political categories needs to be abandoned. As discussed at the outset, it is not sufficient to extend the parameters of the traditional historiography to include women. What is needed is a challenge to be mounted on what has been deemed historically, and politically, significant.

For McClintock, the reason for the overlooking of women's domestic experiences in traditional accounts, lies in the fact that these experiences were perceived as belonging to the "private" sphere.⁸¹ It is in the "public" sphere that the traditional historical narratives have deemed the space where the nation was created. Throughout traditional accounts there is a binary mode of conceptualising the world: family or nation. The binary opposition which the doctrine of separate spheres establishes places men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. The public sphere, that men were said to inhabit, revolved around the world of business and commerce, the market, and politics. Conversely, the private sphere was seen and portrayed as the world of women, and as an inferior and auxiliary retreat away from public concerns. It was a

⁸¹Ibid.

world which revolved around nurturant activities which focused on children, husbands, and family.⁸²

The concept of separate spheres and the ensuing “public”/“private” dichotomy presented a way of studying women’s history that employed social, and cultural, as well as political, themes.⁸³ The acceptance of the separate spheres ideology also “granted” intellectual permission to investigate women’s lives in the so-called private sphere.⁸⁴ However liberating to women’s history this model may have appeared, it did not take long for scholars to begin to query its power and universality, and it soon became evident that the dichotomy could obscure, as well as reveal, the lived reality of men and women.⁸⁵ Historians interested in questions of race and class, and their intersection with gender began to seriously question the relevance of a theoretical framework that seemed to focus on white middle class women.⁸⁶

An understanding of how the categories of “public” and “private” had been created and used in both political theory and social practice was needed. In 1979 Susan Moller Okin⁸⁷ re-examined Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Mill in order to understand how their conceptions of women revealed their beliefs about the naturalness of the family and its separation from the polis. Okin argued that adding women back into the

⁸²C.Hall, “Private Persons versus Public Someones: class, gender, and politics in England, 1780-1850”, *White Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990, p.154.

⁸³L.K.Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol.75, No.1, 1988.

⁸⁴S.M.Reverby and D.O.Helly, “Introduction: Converging on History”, in Helly and Reverby (Eds.), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1992, p.6.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid,pp.6-7, and Kerber, p.17.

⁸⁷S.Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979.

polity would first require a rethinking of the basic political categories. In doing this it was necessary to dissolve the false barrier between the “public” and the “private”.⁸⁸ Historians such as Davidoff and Hall have recognised this, and remind us that notions of the “public” and the “private” were social constructions, which represented “a view as to what the world should be like, rather than a reflection of the social totality”.⁸⁹ A prime example of this from 1906-1925 is the governmental policies concerning New Zealand’s birthrate. Fear of racial degeneration and the “yellow hordes” prompted a push towards maternalistic policies for the sake of nation and the Empire.⁹⁰ In this instance, it is demonstrated how public attention and government policies combined to transform the “private sphere” of women, home and the family into a concern of the “public sphere”.

The idea of separate spheres, however, did provide 1970s women’s historians with a way to study women that moved beyond the earlier whiggish tendency to view women’s history as an inevitable march toward the vote for women. Women’s Suffrage, and the campaign for it, has traditionally dominated discussions of “women and politics” in western democracies, inadvertently or necessarily accepting the traditional male definition of what constituted political activity.⁹¹ Writing in 1987, some fifteen years after her *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand*⁹² was first published, Patricia

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹L.Davidoff & C.Hall, “The architecture of public and private life: English middle-class society in a provincial town 1780-1850” in D.Fraser & A.Sutcliffe (Eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, London, Edward Arnold, 1983, p.327.

⁹⁰B.Brookes, “Aspects of Women’s Health, 1885-1945”, in L.Bryder (Ed.), *A Healthy Country: Essays on the Social History of Medicine in New Zealand*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1991.

⁹¹Blair, p.3.

⁹²P.Grimshaw, *Women’s Suffrage in New Zealand*, Auckland, Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, 1987.

Grimshaw acknowledges that: “it was possible to write about the suffragists without assaulting perceived convictions of what was manifestly important about the past.”⁹³ While she was focusing on an area that she herself admits did not radically challenge what was considered historically significant, she was considering women’s place within this process for the first time.

An examination of suffrage alone, however, in order to ascertain women’s political activity in the construction of the nation would be insufficient. It would be falling into precisely the trap that Susan Magarey has commented “requires an anachronistic, insular, and politically limited set of blinkers, derived from late twentieth century assumptions about the inevitability of parliamentary politics and the confinement of radical political action to campaigning around the ballot box.”⁹⁴ Lake has recently added that these “blinkers” would not only have to be anachronistic, but also phallogentric. Political power, like sexual power, has to be visible to be seen to exist, and parliaments possess just that solid, visual form.⁹⁵ How then are we to take a re-cast look at politics in a way that will include the activities and achievements of women?

“Politics”, like the nation itself, has presented itself as a gender neutral term. The very definition of politics, however, rests on the male recognition of activity. It is through elections and the formal mechanisms of the state that politics, in its conventional male defined sense, has come to find its meaning. Social movements have

⁹³Ibid,p.125.

⁹⁴S.Magarey, “Why Didn't They Want to be Members of Parliament? Suffragists in South Australia”, in C.Daley and M.Nolan (Eds.), *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1994, pp.81-2.

⁹⁵M.Lake, “Feminist History as National History: Writing the Political History of Women”, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.106, No.1, 1996, p.160.

not been considered to be political at all, that is unless they end up running candidates or forming formal political parties.⁹⁶ Conventional political science models, with their focus on the institutions of the state, and retention of the separate spheres dichotomy, have done little to illuminate the position of women in politics.⁹⁷

The editors of the recent collection of essays, *U.S. History as Women's History* have suggested a way to view the history of women that makes it clear that women did have a political history. They suggest a "more capacious" understanding of the possible ingredients of politics.⁹⁸ Paula Baker has provided us with a definition that will allow us to do this. She has suggested a definition of politics that includes any action, formal or informal, taken to affect the course or behaviour of the government or the community.⁹⁹ It is this definition that is at the heart of the strategies that both Lake and Vickers offer. Lake argues for a conceptual framework that enables us to recognise both women engaged in the formal conventional world of politics, and also allows us to see women's history as a history of creativity and accomplishment.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Vickers calls for a strategy of "double vision". This involves not only looking to evidence of women's presence in male created and male controlled formal political institutions, but also looking to women's participation in community based women's groups and

⁹⁶J.Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics", in L.Kealey and J.Sangster (Eds.), *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989, p.17.

⁹⁷Ibid. See also Lake, "Feminist History as National History", p.161.

⁹⁸ L.Kerber, A.Kesler-Harris, K.Kish Sklar (Eds.), *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995, p.8.

⁹⁹P.Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society", *American Historical Review*, No.89, June 1984, p.622.

¹⁰⁰Lake, "Feminist History as National History", p.161.

organisations.¹⁰¹ It is also to women's voluntary organisations that Baker herself considers we should turn our attention in order to take a re-cast look at women's political involvement.¹⁰²

WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AND THE CHALLENGE TO THE MASCULINE NATION

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a clash occurred between the masculinist nation discussed earlier and the growing needs of a developing nation, when during the last third of the nineteenth century, the increasing rate of urbanisation forced many in the cities to question the values that these legends eulogised.¹⁰³ The frontier man was seen as unnecessary now that the bush had been broken in. More than this, he was viewed as an impediment to the construction of another image that New Zealand was busily promoting of itself: that of the physically and morally healthy country.¹⁰⁴ Urbanisation also meant that demands of the capitalist society were increasing. To fulfil the needs of this society, efficiently run, hygienic homes were needed to reproduce the workforce.¹⁰⁵ The male of the national legend became increasingly inappropriate as a lived reality.

It was women's organisations who spearheaded the campaign to transform New Zealand into this morally healthy nation. Central to the ideology of all the women's organisations discussed in this thesis is social purity. This ideology propounded the

¹⁰¹Vickers,p.20.

¹⁰²Baker,p.647.

¹⁰³J.J.Phillips, *A Man's Country?*,p.49.

¹⁰⁴ For a fuller discussion of New Zealand as a "healthy country" and the relevant literature see Chapter Two of this thesis.

¹⁰⁵J.Smart, "'For the Good that We Can Do': Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship", *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol.19, Autumn 1994,p.42.

necessity to uplift and transform society by inculcating habits of clean living and godliness.¹⁰⁶ The social purity movement sought to eliminate the social and moral evils spawned by the godlessness of city life, and to replace them with domestic virtues. The movement for moral reform had its origins in the late eighteenth century evangelical revival. Out of this revival groups emerged with the explicit aim of purifying society in both Britain and America.¹⁰⁷ One of these groups, the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, spread to the settler colonies, including New Zealand, and had a powerful influence. Together, with other secular and non-secular women's organisations, New Zealand women worked for the purification of their society.

The harmony of family life was the focus of this ideology: a family based on the lifetime monogamous fidelity of a Christian heterosexual couple whose sexuality was dedicated to procreation not pleasure.¹⁰⁸ The industrial revolution had led to a Britain that was rapidly changing. Extended family ties were diminished and in its place the smaller nuclear family took centre stage. With women removed from the economically productive tasks an idealised women emerged. In middle and upper class families women's activities were now focused on bearing and rearing children.¹⁰⁹ True Womanhood was defined by "four cardinal virtues": piety; purity; submissiveness; and

¹⁰⁶S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.25.

¹⁰⁷R.Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920*, Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1996, p.11.

¹⁰⁸J.J.Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The historical construction of femininity in twentieth century Australia*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984, p.80.

¹⁰⁹R.Howe and S.Swain, "Fertile Grounds for Divorce: Sexuality and Reproductive Imperatives", in K.Saunders and R.Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p.160.

domesticity.¹¹⁰ It was this conception of “true womanhood” that the settlers landed with in New Zealand.

Fundamental to this idea of “true womanhood” was the notion of respectability. A large number of books and articles emerged in Victorian England that defined the role of the “respectable lady”.¹¹¹ In 1839, just before the first large group of settlers left England for New Zealand, Mrs Sarah Stickney Ellis’ *The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* was released in its first edition. This book, concerned with women’s role and mission in life, reminded women of their deep responsibilities. By decree of custom, tradition, and the very nature of their sex, women had the function of preserving the moral fibre of the nation. This function was to be carried out within the walls of two sanctified institutions, home and family. As “the guardians of the comfort” of the home women were to maintain a pure and gracious atmosphere, an unruffled serenity and a strong moral purpose.¹¹² Although written by and for women of the middle and upper classes, the impact of such books had more far reaching effects. Strongly influenced by pressure to conform, working class women striving for respectability adopted a similar ideal.¹¹³

It was within these terms that nineteenth century women campaigned for, and won, the vote. They argued that they could bring a new morality and purity to the “public” sphere if granted the franchise. After the vote was won women continued to

¹¹⁰B.Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860”, *American Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.2, part 1, summer 1966, p.152.

¹¹¹ Although unsure by her own admission just how many of the women who migrated to New Zealand actually read the book, Raewyn Dalziel briefly considers one of these tracts in R.Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet: Women’s Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.11, No.2, 1977.

¹¹²*Ibid*, p112.

¹¹³Howe and Swain, p.160.

cast their campaigns for the betterment of the lives of women and children within this framework. Women worked to erode male power and dominance of society by claiming that they were working for the betterment of the race and the nation through the implementation of accepted womanly attributes: upholders of morality and social purity. It is this process that Marilyn Lake has labelled the “contest for national culture”.¹¹⁴

Writing about late nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia, Lake argues that a contest was waged between men and women for control of the national culture. How applicable are these arguments to the New Zealand context then? I would argue that the issues that are raised are relevant for a study of women and the New Zealand nation. New Zealand, like Australian, society in the late nineteenth century had elevated masculinist values to the status of national traditions. In fact New Zealand shared much in common with its Tasman neighbour in this respect. The periodical that Lake bases her argument on, the *Bulletin*, was in fact also New Zealand’s most influential literary journal throughout the 1890s.¹¹⁵ While differences certainly existed between the masculinism of Australia and the masculinism of New Zealand there are sufficient similarities to be able to apply Lake’s arguments to late nineteenth century New Zealand.

Lake views the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Women’s movement as aiming at dethroning a style of masculinity - a style which had detrimental consequences on the lives of women. In particular they sought to curtail male privilege

¹¹⁴Lake, “The Politics of Respectability”, p.116.

¹¹⁵R.Arnold, “The Australian Peoples and their World, 1888-1915”, in K.Sinclair (Ed.), *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1987, p.62.

through an attack on such things as male drinking and sexual indulgence.¹¹⁶ For Lake to view the contest as being between respectability and unrespectability is to ignore the sexual politics that were operating.¹¹⁷ Rather the contest needs to be viewed as a gendered contest. The masculinist way of life was directly challenged by women who couched their arguments in terms of the need for a feminisation of community standards. It was attributes that women saw themselves as possessing because they were women that were employed by the women in this contest.

Chris McConville's "response"¹¹⁸ agreed with Lake in that there was a "battle" for control of the national culture at the end of the nineteenth century, but for McConville, it was never a "simple polarisation of men and women".¹¹⁹ He sees the antagonists as the social reformers on one hand, and the working class of the inner city on the other. For McConville the fact that social reformers targeted women as well as men is a fact that serves to negate Lake's argument. As is his contention that the social reform of the late nineteenth century was not feminist, in fact McConville sees the social reform movement as constituting a "proto-feminism" that was essentially negative for women, and especially working class women.¹²⁰ Whether it be the raising of the age of consent having the "negative" impact of increasing controls and surveillance on working class girls, or the campaign against prostitution taking away

¹¹⁶ Lake, "The Politics of Respectability". Although the first wave feminists in Britain and the United States shared similar concerns, she argues that it was different in Australia, here masculinist values had been elevated to the status of national tradition through the left wing press in publications such as the *Bulletin*.

¹¹⁷Ibid,p.127.

¹¹⁸C.McConville, "Rough Women, Respectable Men and Social Reform: A Response To Lake's 'Masculinism'", *Historical Studies*, Vol.22, No.88, April 1987.

¹¹⁹Ibid,p.433.

¹²⁰Ibid,p.438.

feminism from social reform. In order to do this he falls back on the anachronistic claim that all it served to do was strengthen the conviction that women's place was in the home.

In her "reply" Judith Allen points to several points where McConville fails to convince.¹²¹ Allen argues that campaigns such as the raising of the age of consent were feminist in nature. She demonstrates how feminism and masculinism - that is the distinct historical political position that advocated the interests of men as a "sexed" group¹²² - collided over this issue. The Australian legislation, like the New Zealand equivalent, placed responsibility for men's sexual activity back onto men. In ways such as this the feminist social reform movement challenged the masculinism of the national culture.

Taking my lead from this Australian literature, I argue that the women's organisations were intent on chipping away at men's privilege. They worked to recast male behaviour into something that was seen as controllable, rather than something rampant that needed to be indulged, whether it be on sexual matters or the matter of temperance. In the Australian literature McConville has attempted to polarise gender and class when conceptualising the contest for national culture. Rather, the New Zealand evidence would suggest that this is a fruitless pursuit. Women worked to transform New Zealand society, but class dictated whether a woman was to be a reformer or reformed. By considering how class cuts across the gender dynamic it is also possible to refute another of McConville's claims. The picture of the working class

¹²⁰Ibid,p.438.

¹²¹J.Allen, "'Mundane' Men: Historians, Masculinity and Masculinism", *Historical Studies*, Vol.22, No.89, October 1987.

¹²²Ibid,pp.617-18.

“rough woman” who lived a life of intemperance, revelled in her sexual freedom, or lived an economically independent life all thanks to prostitution is invoked by McConville. The fact that some women were participants in the masculinist culture does not mean that women were not intent on debunking the culture. It is masculinism, and not masculinity, that the women attacked. The middle class organisers of the women’s organisations worked in a dual way. On the one hand they worked to change the laws of the country in an attempt to deny male privilege, but they also worked to inculcate young working class women to a higher level of “purity”. The organisations recognised that women too could be a part of the masculinist culture, and sought to further erode it by protecting the young women.

While this has meant that their activities have been dismissed as mere women’s work and excluded from subsequent considerations of the construction of the nation, the perception of women as moral mothers of the nation did carry some contemporary benefits. Many women’s organisations combined political activity and domesticity through motherhood. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed motherhood elevated to new heights on the international stage. This elevation was particularly high in New Zealand, where the nation was rapidly constructing an identity around the figure of the healthy citizen. As motherhood became increasingly important to the nation, women sought to extend their role, arguing that as women and mothers they would imbue public life with the qualities that only women possessed.¹²³ Their political demands, couched in these terms, did not challenge the “canons” of

¹²³M.Hutching, “Mothers of the World: Women, Peace, and Arbitration in Early Twentieth Century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.27, No.2, October 1993, p.173.

domesticity and separate spheres that many men and women held dear.¹²⁴ By adopting this strategy that did not challenge male hegemony, these women avoided a male backlash reaction such as described by Joan Landes in post revolution France. After a brief period of female activism in the new public spaces following the Revolution, male revolutionaries “recoiled from the unnatural spectacle of political women.”¹²⁵ Likewise the organisations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries managed to avoid the fate of their Jacobin counterparts. From 1793 women’s clubs were prohibited. William Sewell argues that this was because women activists represented a threat to Jacobins’ masculinity.¹²⁶

MATERNAL CITIZENS AND THE NATION

When the “second wave” feminist scholars turned their attention to the campaigns of the “first wave” feminists and the organisations involved in these contests they found little to celebrate. The suffragists were castigated for what the historians read as social conservatism, which was at odds with these historians’ own contemporary feminist demands. They argued that in accepting and glorifying the “private” sphere of the home, the very source of women’s oppression, the patriarchal family, was left unchallenged. Raewyn Dalziel went as far as to claim that this “had a strangling effect on women’s role in New Zealand society.”¹²⁷ Phillida Bunkle argued

¹²⁴P.Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society”, *American Historical Review*, No.89, 1984, p.625.

¹²⁵J.Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988, p.146.

¹²⁶J.Damousi, “Socialist women and gendered space: Anti-conscription and anti-war campaigns 1914-18”, in J.Damousi and M.Lake (Eds.), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.256.

¹²⁷R.Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet: Women’s Role and the Vote In Nineteenth Century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.11, No.2, October 1977, p.123.

that the temperance activities of the WCTU laid the foundations for much of the rigid outlook and restrictive legislation that the 1970s feminists found most objectionable, particularly in relation to drinking and to sexuality.¹²⁸ This critique of the suffrage movement and their strategies is not confined to the New Zealand context alone, historians in Australia and the United States have stated similar arguments.¹²⁹

Such a critique is anachronistic, it ignores the fact that women, armed with their traditional function as “mother” could and did negotiate a greater role for themselves in the nation. The women’s organisations of the period offered an interpretation of political life that emphasised the role of women as saviours of the race, justifying their activity because they were mothers. They connected women’s rights to the experience of motherhood. The language these women used extended women’s “realm” from the home into the community, city, and ultimately the nation.¹³⁰ These organisations transformed the nation through attributes closely linked to the traditional female sphere, motherhood and domesticity. By using political strategies that we would label “maternalist” they transformed motherhood from women’s perceived “private” concern into a matter of “public” concern and policy.¹³¹

¹²⁸P.Bunckle, “The Origin of the Women's Movement in New Zealand: The Women's Christian Union 1885-1895”, in P.Bunckle and B.Hughs (Eds.), *Women in New Zealand Society*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin 1980.

¹²⁹P.Grimshaw, “Women's Suffrage in New Zealand Revisited: Writings from the Margins”, in C.Daley and M.Nolan (Eds.), *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1994, pp.30-32.

¹³⁰E.Boris, “The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the “Political””, in S.Koven and S.Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, London, Routledge, 1993, 213.

¹³¹S.Koven and S.Michel, “Introduction: “Mother Worlds”, in S.Koven and S.Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, London, Routledge, 1993, p.2.

It is precisely this strategy that political philosopher Carole Pateman has labelled maternal feminism. In *The Sexual Contract* she alerts us to the ambiguities that liberal theory held for women. Equality was posited in terms of prioritising the rational, autonomous and therefore masculine human being. This means that women were forced to fight for equality in gendered terms. Their stand had to be taken as “women”, in order to gain rights that were essentially defined for the opposite sex.¹³² Her solution is a “sexually differentiated” conception of citizenship that recognises women as women. In this conceptualisation political significance is placed on the capacity that men lack: to create life. Motherhood, according to Pateman, should be treated with equal political relevance as what has traditionally been seen as ultimate test of citizenship: a man’s willingness to both fight and die for his country.¹³³

Women’s political power sourcing from their reproductive capabilities is not as simple as it may seem. As Pateman notes that ever since a knowledge of paternity was first acquired, men have insisted that they were the prime movers in physical as well as political life. As the sperm was the active, dynamic, and creative source of life men were said to be “seminal”.¹³⁴ In terms of political life men have appropriated birth for themselves. Political history abounds with stories of men giving political birth, of men creating new forms of political life or political life itself.¹³⁵ As argued at the outset of

¹³²C.Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, London, Polity Press, 1988.

¹³³C.Pateman, “Feminism and Participatory Democracy”, unpublished paper presented to the meeting of the American Philosophical Association, St Louis, Missouri, May 1986, p.26, discussed in C.Mouffe, “Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics”, in J.Butler and J.W.Scott (Eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York, Routledge, 1992.

¹³⁴Pateman(1988),pp.35-6.

¹³⁵Ibid,p.36.

this discussion the pioneer, the sportsman, and the Anzac soldier are all men who are credited with “giving birth” to the New Zealand nation.¹³⁶

The Australian collaborative work, *Creating a Nation*, set out to reclaim the idea of birth as belonging to women. In many ways, this work sets Pateman’s idea of maternal citizenship at the fore of its analysis.¹³⁷ Through employing Pateman’s idea of “sexually differentiated” citizenship this book issued a direct challenge to the masculine construction of the nation. The authors saw women’s role in Australian nationbuilding as primarily in the family: by giving birth to children, or by refusing to do so, in sustaining multi-cultural communities, creating wealth, shaping a maternalist welfare state, or in inscribing the meanings of our experience and culture.¹³⁸ The aim of the authors is to organise the narrative of national generation around figures of women in childbirth, and not traditional figures such as men at war.

Recent feminist writers from a range of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives have questioned the wisdom of viewing women’s political power in terms of maternal citizenship.¹³⁹ Mouffe, in a direct challenge to Pateman, argues that the maternalist conception of citizenship is ascribing women a role in politics that serves to cement them as the antitheses of citizens, or political participants. For Mouffe, Pateman’s “bio-gendered” view of citizenship results in women being presented as the symbol of everything natural, and is excluded from the “public” sphere. As a result of this, and in

¹³⁶For a discussion on this in the Australian context see: M.Lake, “Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation - Nationalism, Gender, and Other Seminal Acts”, *Gender and History*, Vol.4, No.3, Autumn 1992.

¹³⁷P.Grimshaw,M.Lake,A.McGrath,M.Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1994.

¹³⁸Ibid,p.1.

¹³⁹For example see: C.Mouffe, “Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics”, in J.Butler and J.W.Scott (Eds.), *Feminists Theorize the Political*, New York, Routledge, 1992, and A. J.Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Mouffe's, view one of the fundamental weaknesses of Pateman's argument, the very binary opposition of men/women is left unchallenged.¹⁴⁰

When considering the political strategies of late nineteenth and early twentieth century women, however, it is also important to consider the political environment they were operating in. The criticisms that the feminist political theorists of the nineteenth century level at the concept of maternal citizenship share much in common with the criticisms that the nineteenth century feminists levelled at the women of the suffrage movement. Both these groups see women as being essentialised either through maternal citizenship or suffrage. The reply to both groups of critics is also similar in nature. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century women expanded their role and transformed the nation by magnifying, and at times exaggerating, their difference as *women*. The very binary opposition of men/women gave these women power, and a point from which to begin their negotiation for a place in the nation. Women emphasised the fact that the men of the opposition represented the "masculine nation" that many were beginning to view as outmoded, and that the women represented the saviours of the nation in that they, because of their womanly virtues, could morally purify the nation. Women sought a voice in "public" affairs as representatives of their sex, by doing this they were received as a sex and not as persons. "Persons" continued to be cast in the male image, but as Marilyn Lake reminds us this was and is the feminist dilemma - the dilemma of difference.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰Mouffe, p.376.

¹⁴¹M.Lake, "Personality, Individuality, Nationality: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship 1902-1940", *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol.19, Autumn 1994, p.35.

Both Mouffe and Philips look forward to a time when sexual difference will not be so relevant to political and social relations, and to this end caution against the feminist espousal of sexually differentiated conceptions of citizenship as self-defeating.¹⁴² Such a hope for the future does not mean that we can impose these values on the past. From the beginning of this thesis' time frame, 1890, to its end 1925, women through their organisations negotiated a place for themselves in the nation. This was achieved through presenting what late twentieth feminists would label an "essentialised woman". Firstly women presented themselves as the moral mothers of the nation. As the production of babies became more important to the nation and the empire women emphasised and represented themselves as the physical mothers of the nation. It was as "maternal citizens" that women were able to take part in the creation of the nation.

RE/PRODUCING THE NEW ZEALAND NATION

This thesis will examine the way in which New Zealand women were crucial to the creation of the New Zealand nation by examining the period 1906-1925. Chapter two examines the context of this period, and establishes the background needed to understand how New Zealand women could vie for a place in the New Zealand nation. The Western preoccupation with the birthrate, and the contemporary beliefs about race and eugenics are explored and linked to the emerging New Zealand national identity. State attempts at "race betterment" are also examined, and the role of women in these movements are questioned.

Covering the years 1906-1914, the third chapter of the thesis examines how various women's organisations took on the task of the instruction of girls and young women for the task of motherhood. Their methods and agendas are explored, and are

¹⁴²quoted in Lake(1994),p.36.

shown to be part of the process of nationbuilding. Not only were the women of the organisations fulfilling a maternal function through their instruction of the younger generations in maternal tasks, they were also fulfilling this traditionally “feminine” task through their the care of arriving immigrant women. It is argued that in these roles, women were crucial to the construction of race, and therefore the nation.

The period 1914-1918 is the subject of the fourth chapter. This period covers World War I, and the role of women as maternal citizens in the war effort is examined. Through a case study of the Otago Women’s Patriotic Association, and Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbooks, the patriotic work of New Zealand women is explored and shown to be maternal. Through their capacity for sacrifice, and in their role as moral mothers of the nation New Zealand women were also fulfilling maternal functions. These activities are once again linked to the New Zealand nation. The fifth and final chapter covers the period from the end of World War I to 1925. These years were marked by renewed and increased attention being focused on the British race, and the role of women in its improvement. Through their maternal functions as moral mothers, as instructors of future mothers, and as surrogate mothers to the increased number of immigrant women and women’s organisations were active participants in the construction of the New Zealand nation.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING THE SCENE

For western European powers, and their overseas empires, mothers and babies were important, and it was in the national interest to care for them.¹ It was such thinking that lay at the root of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' physical ideal of "woman". Increasingly women came to be viewed not only in terms of beauty, but also in terms of physical fitness for maternity. The "good" maternal body would produce the "good" child.² This preoccupation has been labelled population ideology, and it is this preoccupation that needs to be examined in order to understand how New Zealand women, through their organisations, were able to active participants in the creation of the New Zealand nation. It was because of the prevailing concerns and fears about the state of the race that women were able to negotiate a place for themselves in the nation.

THE POPULATION DEBATE

Throughout western Europe, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand during the early twentieth century, the desire to increase the birth rate became a primary focus. This represented a shift from the early nineteenth century when the views of Thomas Malthus held sway with most political economists. According to Malthus excessive population was dangerous, as it led to exhaustion of resources, war, epidemic

¹P.Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880-1950*, London, MacMillan Press, 1997, p.1.

²J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, p.175.

diseases, and other natural checks on growth. This theory was strengthened by another popular social theory of the period: social darwinism. Darwinist notions of the struggle for existence were viewed as being an essential part of the survival of the race.³ As early as the 1850s, however, others were offering alternative hypotheses. One such theorist was Charles Kingsley who in 1858 argued that over-population was impossible “in a country [Britain] that has the greatest colonial empire that the world has ever seen”.⁴ Spurred on by a falling birthrate, the publication of J.R. Seely’s *The Expansion of England* in 1883 also placed population as a crucial factor in the maintenance of Empire. Seely argued that if the British population did not increase fast enough to fill the empty spaces of the empire, then others would.⁵ By the late nineteenth century Malthusian beliefs began to give way to the fear that the British race had stopped growing.

There was also a fear that the race had stopped growing, that industrialisation and urbanisation were leading to the deterioration of the race. The recruitment of British men for the South African War in 1899 further served to reinforce the idea that the manhood of Britain was subject to physical deterioration. Nearly sixty percent⁶ of the volunteers were found to be unfit for service. The reported brave performance of the New Zealand troops in South Africa, however, gave the British some hope. Englishmen, such as the poet Rudyard Kipling, applauded the superior physique of the soldiers from

³A.Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood”, *History Workshop*, Issue 5, Spring 1978, pp9-10.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid,p.10.

⁶M. Tennant, *Children’s Health, The Nation’s Wealth: A History of Children’s Health Camps*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books/Historical Branch,Department of Internal Affairs, 1994, p.23.

the colonies.⁷ The men of the colonies had not suffered deterioration like their British “brothers”, and were therefore viewed as a safeguard of the race’s future.

It was in this context that the image of New Zealand as a healthy country became crucial in the construction of the dominant national identity. New Zealand may have had a waning birth rate but it still projected itself as a “healthy country”. Statistical findings such as the 1899 *Report on the Statistics of New Zealand*, helped to reinforce this image when it found that the death rate “contrasts very strikingly with those in the other Australasian colonies and European countries, and furnishes further evidence of the great salubrity of the climate of the colony.”⁸ Certainly one of the most prominent nineteenth century images of New Zealand was that of “an ideal society” for settlers. The colony was portrayed as a land of natural abundance. The new land could, it was said, supply inhabitants with as much food as was desired.⁹ The pure, wholesome, plentiful, and generally healthy images of New Zealand were juxtaposed against the image of decadence and decay of industrial Europe.

The fear of “race suicide”, however, was alive and well in New Zealand, as was the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries desire for “National Efficiency”. This was a movement that aimed to produce a more homogenous, unified, “decent”, and productive population.¹⁰ The so called “Asiatic hordes”, casting their eyes on New Zealand, the Russo-Japanese War, and the 1909 scare of German naval strength, served

⁷J.Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1987, p.152.

⁸B.Brookes, “Aspects of Women's Health, 1885-1945” in L.Bryder (Ed.), *A Healthy Country: Essays on the Social History of Medicine in New Zealand*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1991, p.150.

⁹M.Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1990, pp29-41.

¹⁰R.White, *Inventing Australia*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1981, p.118.

to fuel these fears in New Zealand.¹¹ Coupled with this was the decline in the Pakeha birth rate. Before the 1880s the colonial population had a high rate of natural increase by western standards. A decline in this rate led to alarm in the 1900s. This alarm was intensified by the findings of the 1904 New South Wales Commission of Inquiry into the birth rate. The resulting report of the Inquiry presented fertility decline in Australasia.¹² The practice of family limitation was damned by a correspondent to Premier Seddon as: “dishonouring to God, degrading to man and woman, and one of the most unpatriotic acts that a man can be guilty of.”¹³

Eugenisists believed that the “race suicide” problem was not only about numerical decline in the population, but that the “best stock” was being outbred by the “unfit”. Dr W.A. Chapple, a New Zealand doctor, summed up the scare in an 1899 medical journal: “the birth rate is rapidly declining amongst the most fit to produce the best offspring, while it is steadily maintained amongst the least fit...”¹⁴ The focus in New Zealand from the late nineteenth century was on producing superior specimens of the British race.

To eugenisists, the category “unfit” was comprised of the poor and unemployed, the physically incapacitated, and the mentally ill, and the physically disabled. Gaining a small, but influential, following in New Zealand at the beginning of the century, eugenics focused on heredity to explain the moral, intellectual, and physical quality of society. As with many other nations at this time the quality of the population was of

¹¹J.J.Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1987, p.153.

¹²M.Tennant, *Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth*, p.20.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴W.A Chapple, “The Fertility of the Unfit”, *Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australasia*, 1899, p.477, cited in Bacchi, p.136.

national concern. Dr Duncan McGregor, Inspector General of Hospitals and Asylums, made the connection between the quality of the population and the nation when he denounced the “propagation of the unfit” as undermining to national strength and character.¹⁵ It was a small leap for many to link “unfit” with criminality and moral degeneracy. Segregation was the solution proposed by many for those categorised as subnormal. For its middle class adherents, eugenics provided a comforting notion, it was easier to believe that poverty and criminality were the result of individual hereditary weakness, rather than a structural flaw of the economy.

Not all those who were intent on increasing the population saw preventing the “unfit” from procreating as the solution. Building on the early nineteenth century theory of Lamarck, that the environment determined certain needs, neo-Lamarckians believed the solution to the “race suicide” problem lay not only in hereditary characteristics. Where they diverged from eugenisists is that they believed that policy to improve the living and working conditions of underprivileged groups could also produce “higher types” in the future.¹⁶ However, most neo-Lamarckians, or environmentalists, would have agreed that the “feeble-minded”, or criminals, should not be allowed to procreate. What they did advocate, was the education of adults and children to avoid diseases and activities that could cause congenital weakness, diseases, or deformities in their children.¹⁷ It would seem that environmentalists found adherents in New Zealand.

¹⁵M.Tennant, *Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth*, p.20.

¹⁶C.Bacchi, “Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes Towards Women, 1870-1920”, in E.Windschuttle (Ed.), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Sydney, Fontana, 1980, pp.137-138.

¹⁷A.Klauss, *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890-1920*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.146.

Speaking in 1919 on the subject of “The Manhood of the Nation”, Charles Chilton informed the assembled audience:

For a healthy nation we require healthy children born of parents sound in body and limb and free from disease, and those children must be surrounded by conditions suitable for their proper development...,education...is the most powerful cement we have....¹⁸

However eugenics and environmentalism should not be viewed as opposites, as both shared a variety of contradictory positions. The environmentalists concentrated on two things: improving the health and fitness of mothers; and bettering the home environment in which children would spend their crucial formative years.

The emergence of the environmentalist strand in the eugenics movement had some other far reaching implications for women. The convergence of the “populate or perish” message with the ascendancy of environmentalism meant that the creation of good, healthy mothers was of national and imperial importance. Women’s bodies and sexuality came increasingly under surveillance, and were placed at the centre of how New Zealand was defining itself as a nation. The ascendancy of environmentalism also meant that women other than middle class women were viewed as important in the re/production of healthy children for the nation. Peoples of the Asiatic races replaced the working class as the “other” or the “lower orders”. Working class women, as long as they were of the respectable working class, became to be seen as part of the solution to the population problem.¹⁹ The production of healthy babies, it was now believed, could be taught to the women of all classes, including the working classes.

¹⁸Charles Chilton, “The Manhood of the Nation”, An Address delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Industrial Corporation of New Zealand, Christchurch, 20 February 1919, Christchurch, Sun Printers, 1919, p.4.

¹⁹L.Finch, *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1993, pp.108,110.

PLUNKET AND RACE BETTERMENT

It was in this context that the much lauded Plunket Society was launched. In 1907, with the help of a group of Dunedin's wealthy women, Frederick Truby King founded the New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children.²⁰ It was this society that came to be known as the Plunket Society, after the organisation's patron Lady Plunket, the wife of the Governor General. While a firm believer in the sterilisation of the "unfit" who were marred by a "hereditary trait", King also believed in environmental solutions.²¹ To King, heredity and environment were not mutually exclusive concepts. Heredity, according to King's philosophy, was the sum of environmental influences over which humanity had "every control" from the moment of conception.²² For these reasons the Plunket message was directed at expectant and potential mothers. There were twelve rules in the Plunket system that a mother had to follow in order to produce a healthy baby for the nation and the empire: breastfeed for the first nine months; give water (boiled); put baby out in the fresh air; dress in "non-restrictive" clothing; bath and dress quickly (no dawdling), give massage (not cuddles, but "muscular exercise and sensory stimulation"); keep warm; teach regularity of all habits; drill in cleanliness; and learn mothering and how not to spoil her baby.²³ If these rules were followed, the Plunket Society held, self reliant and self regulating subjects of

²⁰E.Olssen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society: An Analysis of a Prescriptive Ideology", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.15, No.1, April 1981, p.7.

²¹*Ibid*,p.90.

²²*Ibid*,p.91.

²³P.Mein Smith, "'That welfare warfare': sectarianism in infant welfare in Australia, 1918-1939", in V.Fildes, L.Marks, and H.Marland (Eds.), *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare 1870-1945*, London, Routledge, 1992, p.235.

the crown would be produced. The clock and regularity provided the key the King's methodology.²⁴

The Plunket Society was not as unique as our national mythology would have us believe. Organisations much like the Plunket Society existed in other countries.²⁵ From the turn of the century, throughout Australasia, there was a trend toward more "scientific" methods of motherhood. New "scientific" principles of organisation and action were introduced into the home in an attempt to make women better mothers.²⁶ The difference of the New Zealand organisation lay in the fact that it was spearheaded by a charismatic medical man.²⁷ In 1925 Truby King received a knighthood in recognition of his work. Phillipa Mein-Smith describes King as a "national icon" who came to personify the baby health movement in the interwar years.²⁸ Mein-Smith also points to the mythology that has grown up around Truby King in New Zealand. The myth making machine has attributed the work of the Plunket society solely to Dr Truby King. The role of women, such as his wife, his adopted daughter, and the nurses, has been overlooked in the quest to construct another male national hero.²⁹

To this list of women who have ^{been} marginalised so to make King a hero, I would add to this list the women of many of the organisations that I examine in this work. One very powerful means by which instruction in the new methods of motherhood was carried out was through women's voluntary organisations. It was through organisations

²⁴Olssen, "Truby King and the Plunket Society", p.13.

²⁵P.Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*, p.87.

²⁶K.Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985, p.3.

²⁷P.Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby*, p.87.

²⁸Ibid.

such as the YWCA, Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides, Girls' Friendly Society, and the Mothers' Union that middle class women were able to reach young working class women to inculcate them to Plunket methods. It was through education and practical measures to improve living conditions that women's organisations were involved in the politics of race betterment. The president of the American Congress of Mothers summed up women's organisations' role in this process in 1914 by asking the question: if seventeen years working for better opportunities for the prenatal care of babies, baby-saving, and the physical and moral care of children was not working for "race betterment", then what was?³⁰ This thesis examines how several women's organisations were instrumental in the process of inculcation, and therefore "race betterment".

As with many women's organisations the Plunket Society saw a strict moral code as fundamental to social stability and public order.³¹ King held that if a mother raised her baby in a manner that adhered to self-discipline and regulation then she was fulfilling her obligations to herself, her child, her society, and her race by producing a child who would shun a life of vice in adulthood.³² There was a direct link between King's philosophy to women's role in the creation in the nation. As this thesis will show, however, the work to raise the moral standards of young women, the potential mothers of the nation, was carried out by many of the women's organisations that are examined in this thesis. It was these women who sought to instil in young working class women a strong moral code, and it was these organisations that were instrumental in the dissemination of the Plunket method to these girls and women.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Klaus, p.146.

³¹Ibid,p.17

³²Ibid.

THE STATE AND RACE BETTERMENT

During the period 1906-1925 the New Zealand government was active in the field of race betterment. Through initiatives such as the Plunket Scheme, and Health camps for children, the state demonstrated that the health of the nation's mothers and children was a matter that they regarded with grave concern. State involvement in the matter of maternal and child welfare and health was not confined to the Plunket scheme alone. Another high profile innovation aimed at the betterment of children's health was the Health Camps scheme. With the first camp being held in 1919, these camps were the product of an inter-war concern over the state of the health of the British race.

State attempts at race betterment, such as plunket and the health camp scheme, have been the subject of examination by New Zealand women's historians.³³ Philippa Mein Smith has studied the Plunket movement, and Margaret Tennant the Health Camp scheme, showing respectively the impact that these state sponsored schemes had on New Zealand women. This thesis aims to move away from an examination of the state's activities and concentrate on the activities of the women themselves. Through their voluntary organisations, New Zealand women were crucial players in the politics of race betterment, but this is a fact that has been largely ignored in previous accounts.³⁴

IN DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

The establishment of the Plunket Society was one response by the New Zealand people to the growing concerns over the state of the British race and their preparedness

³³ For detail on the health camp scheme see Tennant, *Children's Health the Nations Wealth*.

³⁴ Anne Else has begun to show the contribution that women's organisations made in her recovery volume, A.Else (Ed.), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1993.

for what seemed to be an imminent war. McAloon, through a case study of Christchurch in the period 1899-1914, has argued that militarist campaigns flourished in the city under the manipulation of men of wealth in the period between the South African War and World War I.³⁵ It was not only through the raising funds to expand the empire's military strength that New Zealanders responded to the call to defend the empire. While some middle class women were involved in efforts to prepare New Zealand militarily for its part in an imperial war through organisations such as the Navy League and the Victoria League³⁶, they were also part of, and subjects of, the wider process of imperial loyalty that was being played out in the Dominion. As school students girls were part of the process of imperial indoctrination that the *School Journal* offered from 1907.³⁷

More specific women-centred campaigns were all rooted in the philosophy that girls and young women were integral to the nation and the empire in their role as potential mothers. The 1907 establishment of the Plunket Society is an obvious example of a campaign that was directed at women to produce better mothers. There were other campaigns that were directed at women that have been ignored in traditional discussions of New Zealand's imperial loyalty in the early twentieth century. In the early twentieth century there were moves within the Education Department to develop a syllabus for girls that would see them emerge from their secondary education well equipped for their role as mothers.³⁸ Subsidies were offered by the Department to girls' schools for the

³⁵J.McAloon, "Militarist Campaigns in New Zealand,c.1899-1914: Trade and Imperialism", unpublished paper delivered to the New Zealand Historical Association, Wellington, February, 1996.

³⁶Ibid,pp.8-10.

³⁷E.P.Malone, "The New Zealand School Journal and The Imperial Ideology", *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.7, No.1, 1973.

³⁸M.Tennant, "Natural Directions: The New Zealand Movement For Sexual Differentiation In Education During the Early Twentieth Century", in B.Brookes, C.MacDonald,M.Tennant (Eds.), *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin, 1984, pp.92-93. For a more

establishment of cooking and dressmaking classes under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act 1901.³⁹ The movement to build national strength and “racial” fitness through gender differentiation in education gained more strength when the School of Home Science was established at the University of Otago in 1911.⁴⁰ During the war years, in 1916, a special committee established by the Council of Education furthered the campaign to produce good mothers through the education system by advocating compulsory home science for both primary and secondary girls.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

The time period in which this thesis is set, 1906-1925, was a period that witnessed much anxiety over the fitness of the British race. It was within this context that New Zealand carved out one of its dominant identities as a nation: the healthy country. New Zealanders took much pride in the fact that they were giving “ethnological comfort” to Britain. In order to both create and maintain this image of national identity several measures, such as the establishment of the Plunket Society and the introduction of compulsory domestic education for girls, were introduced. These measures were a clear indication that women, in their capacity as mothers, were seen as integral to the image around which the nation was constructing its identity. It was in this context that women, through their organisations, were able to negotiate a place for themselves in the nation. Realising that new emphasis was being placed on women in their traditional role

detailed discussion of the gendered nature of education in New Zealand see: R.Fry, *It's Different for Daughters: A History of the Curriculum for Girls in New Zealand Schools, 1900-1975*, Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1985.

³⁹M. Tennant, “Natural Directions”: The New Zealand Movement for Sexual Differentiation in Education During the Early Twentieth Century”, in B.Brookes, C.MacDonald, and M.Tennant (Eds.), *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin, 1986, p.92-93.

⁴⁰S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.203.

as mothers, women's organisations showed that they were active in the production of motherhood. Through this new found "importance" to the nation, women were instrumental in the creation of the New Zealand nation.

⁴¹Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

“NO NATION RISES HIGHER THAN ITS WOMEN”:

1906-1914

By 1906 the National Council of Women were in recess and no other single women's organisation emerged to provide a unified voice in championing women's rights. In her recent study on the National Council of Women, Dorothy Page argues that the Council's "main problem" by 1906 was lack of leadership.¹ What emerged after 1906 was shift in focus to organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Plunket Society, and the Church based groups. In 1976 Margaret Tennant argued that these organisations were primarily concerned with providing welfare for women and children rather than "political reform".² However twenty years later, I would argue that these organisations' work to provide welfare for women and children cannot be excluded from the whole idea of "political reform". As guardians of the race, in both the physical and moral senses, women worked to raise the status of the maternal figure. By filling their traditional maternal function of care and nurture, either as moral mothers, physical mothers, or as surrogate mothers to newly arrived immigrant girls, New Zealand women were crucial to the creation of a New Zealand nation that was Anglo Celtic or, to contemporary minds "racially pure".

¹D. Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, and the National Council of Women, 1996, p.46.

²M. Tennant, "Matrons with a Mission: Women's Organisations in New Zealand, 1893-1915", M.A. Thesis, Massey University, 1976.

MORAL MOTHERS OF THE NATION

In New Zealand the regulation, surveillance and control of young working class girls' sexuality and morality became of vital importance to the nation. Young women, and especially working class women, were seen as being at risk from men who could corrupt their morality. Many were prepared to concede that it was young women's gullibility and foolishness that made them susceptible to the desires of the "seducer". The seduction of working class girls prior to 1840 had only been a concern in the Britain that the settlers had left behind, in as much as it deprived employers of their servants, and fathers of marriage prospects for their daughters. Lynette Finch argues that in the second half of the nineteenth century seduction was repositioned as a moral crime which threatened society.³

Women's organisations saw it as their task to save these girls, and in doing so they were performing a crucial task for the nation. Organisations such as the YWCA, Girls' Friendly Society, and the Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides provided young women with alternative spaces to the immoral and sometimes dangerous city streets: their club rooms. The YWCA saw themselves as providing "a central place which represents protection and safety".⁴ According to the Association "those who study social problems, and know the dangers and temptations of a city ... realise how necessary it is to provide a place where they [young women] can read, write, study, engage in social intercourse with others of their own age, and indulge in rational enjoyment".⁵ In doing this it was believed that "self respecting" girls who wished to improve themselves were given the

³L.Finch, *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, class and surveillance*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1993, p.88.

⁴undated[c1900-1912], unsourced, "Young Women's Christian Association: Its Claim for Sympathy and Support", MSX 2951.

⁵Ibid.

opportunity and facilities to do so. There was a clear link between the between the protection of young women and their value to the nation. The YWCA saw their work in this area as laying the foundations “on which to build up a healthy moral physical and social life, and so do away in later years with irresponsibility, irreverence, carelessness, and inefficiency”.⁶

To the YWCA it was especially important that young women be given the opportunity to become strong moral figures. In a speech of 1912, Miss Chandler told a gathering of YWCA members that it was a mistake spending money to improve boys, but letting girls “go as they liked”, as it was a “known fact that women would raise a man up to her standard, or drag him down”.⁷ This was not a view confined within the YWCA; Ann Smeeton, President of the YWCA from 1912-13, urged girls to set a high standard for their men and boyfriends. The result of such conduct would be that such friends would rise to the standard set for them.⁸ It was on these grounds that the YWCA argued that they had a right to “demand the sympathy and support of the business men in the work they were doing”.⁹ In a similar vein, one of the justifications for the expansion of the Association in the 1910s was found in the popular slogan: “No nation rises higher than its women”. In the 1910s this referred to women’s role as moulders of young minds, and upholders and exemplars of moral values.¹⁰ With an emerging emphasis on women as the moral mothers of the nation, women’s organisations, such as

⁶Ibid.

⁷YWCA, YWCA Scrapbook, July 1912, unsourced, MS Group-233, MSX 2951, “YWCA: Public Welcome to Miss Barnes, Striking Comparisons”.

⁸*S.Coney, Every Girl*, p.55.

⁹YWCA, YWCA Scrapbook, July 1912, unsourced, MS Group-233, MSX 2951, “YWCA: Public Welcome to Miss Barnes, Striking Comparisons”.

the YWCA, used this to their advantage. From their new power position these women negotiated improved conditions for young working class women. With money from the community, the Association was able to provide rooms and classes that sought to improve the lives of these women. Importantly the appeal to the community was made on the basis of women's role in the nation: that of moral mother.

When Miss Barnes, the newly appointed national travelling secretary for Australasia, arrived in New Zealand in 1912, she travelled the country addressing local Associations. In one such address in Dunedin she expressed one function of the YWCA in explicit terms; she saw the role of the YWCA as one of putting a high standard of honour before all girls. She also believed that the association was performing a service to the community through its work with the girls.¹¹ On more than one occasion she expressed that it was her opinion that there were too many young girls on the streets of New Zealand cities at night.¹² She believed that the "fiercest" temptations for the young working girls came before they were twenty, because prior to this age the necessary resisting powers had not been properly developed. In these speeches Barnes was pointing out the function and service that the YWCA delivered to communities. They were saving young women from the life of vice and immorality that the streets of the cities offered, and instilling in them high moral principles that was of great worth to the nation. The young members of the YWCA would not only raise the standard of young men they came into contact with, but they would also be morally fit mothers to the coming generation.

¹⁰S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.55.

¹¹Young Women's Christian Association, MS-Group 233, MSX 2951, 23 February 1912, unsourced [Dunedin Newspaper], "Young Women's Christian Association: Its Appeal to Every Woman, Address by Miss Barnes".

¹²Ibid, and S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.42.

It was not only women who were advancing the conception of women as the moral mothers of the nation. Respectable men were also articulating these ideals. One such man was Archdeacon Harper, who delivered an address to the executive of the Wellington branch of the Girls' Friendly Society on the subject of "Ideal Womanhood". He stressed the need to impress on girls the "tremendous influence" they have not only on each other, but also on the men with whom they came into contact.¹³ Likewise Colonel Cossgrove, founder of the Girl Peace Scouts, stated that he was a great believer in the power and influence of women over men. For that reason, he said, if they set a standard of morality, it would result in a high moral tone in men.¹⁴ Through men's accepting, and advancing, of women's role as the moral mothers of the nation, the women's organisations were able to expand their influence in matters of public morality.

It is this conception of womanhood that in the 1970s Anne Summers labelled "God's police".¹⁵ Juxtaposed against the "damned whores", the prostitutes and convict women, of Australian history the middle class moral reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were given this now well-used title. They were so called for their activity as the moral guardians of the community. This group, that the women of the organisations examined in this thesis fell into, used their traditional maternal role to campaign for a nation that was morally pure. Although these organisations were not using this role of women to directly argue for the increased role of women in society, the politics of their actions can not be simply relegated to the so called "private sphere"

¹³GFS, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1910-11, pp4-5, ATL, 85-075-03/2

¹⁴Girl Guides Association, Record of GPS - Rotorua 24 November 1914-22 July 1921, 2 October 1915, p.16, ATL, 88-130-01/20.

¹⁵Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, 2nd edition, Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin Books, 1994, pp.313-336.

and dismissed as not part of the process of nationbuilding. On the contrary, the role of women as moral mothers or “God’s police”, allowed women a way to negotiate a place for themselves in the nation. The Canterbury Women’s Institute used this conception of womanhood, that was based on women as mothers, to continue the campaign for equal political rights for women, stating that: “The Canterbury Women’s Institute believes that until full political rights accorded to women, the children of the community as a whole can never enjoy the careless happy childhood that belongs by human right to every one of our children”.¹⁶

Two such campaigns were the temperance campaign and the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act. To many of the women working to purify society at this time the dangers of the city streets went hand in hand with the lack of temperance in society.¹⁷ The Canterbury Women’s Institute urged women to exercise their moral influence as women to bring about prohibition. In 1908 the Institute stated that it: “deplores the increase of intemperance among women as reported by the Police Inspectors and earnestly requests New Zealand women to use their votes in the upcoming general election for the suppression of the drink traffic”.¹⁸

It was not only the traditionally recognised “political” organisations, such as the Canterbury Women’s Institute, who were campaigning for a temperate nation. In 1906 the Mothers’ Union voted that the upcoming annual prayer should urge that “means may be found to check the increase of drunkenness...and that those who are prone to the habit

¹⁶27 April 1906, Canterbury Women's Institute Minute Book, 1905-1908, Canterbury Museum, ARC 1991-83.

¹⁷I.Tyrrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1991, p.192.

¹⁸3 April 1908, Canterbury Women's Institute Minute Book, 1905-1908, Canterbury Museum, ARC 1991-83.

of intemperance may be delivered from their bondage.”¹⁹ In 1908, the executive of Mothers’ Union had a proposal put before it that it invite all branches of the union to attend a mass meeting of women to be held under the auspices of the WCTU. The object of the meeting was to encourage all women, as the Canterbury Women’s Institute were doing, to “consider their responsibilities as citizens, and to use the power conferred on them by the franchise” in regard to licensing laws. The executive concluded that this was an important issue and that women should exercise their rights as voters on this matter.²⁰

Respectable men, such as Colonel Cossgrove, also supported and advanced women’s role in the control of male behaviour towards alcohol. The handbook *Peace Scouting for Girls* contained a section on “Sobriety”, indicating that the Girl Peace Scouts sought to inculcate its girl members in the virtues of a life of temperance. In the handbook, girls were reminded that it was laid down in the rules for a Girl Scouts’ attitudes to bad behaviour that she should have nothing to do with one who smells of drink.²¹ According to the handbook, Girl Scouts had a duty to rescue men from the “clutches of the drink fiend” and “less fortunate sisters from the terrors of a drunkard’s home.” Cossgrove considered that if the girls of the organisation were to succeed in this task that “the coming generations will thank God for the organisation.”²² The message to

¹⁹25 October 1906, Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1903-1912, 23 March 1910.

²⁰Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1903-1912, 21 October 1908. It is interesting to note that the executive also decided that the “Mothers’ Union, as a society, should not take any part in politics”. They did however resolve to send a notice to every branch so that members of the Union could attend the meeting as individuals, but not as members of the Mothers’ Union.

²¹D.Cossgrove, *Peace Scouting for Girls*, 1910, p.149, ATL, 88-130-26/01.

²²*Ibid*, p.150.

the girls was cast in language that emphasised women's ability to influence men to a more pure life.

The campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act was an attempt by women's organisations to recast male sexuality as controllable. The legislation that New Zealand had on its statute books had been enacted in 1869 in a "semi-secret manner" by the "ruling elite" because it was considered too delicate a subject to be discussed openly.²³ The New Zealand Act followed similar acts passed in Britain during the 1860s. The British acts had been enacted to try and control outbreaks of venereal disease in the army, and were temporarily applied in port and garrison towns. The legislation empowered the police to enforce genital examination on women who were suspected of being prostitutes, and then to be detained if they were found to be infected with venereal disease. The British law was repealed in 1886 but New Zealand did not follow suit on this matter until 1910.²⁴

The eventual repeal of the Act in 1910 was the product of a long and sustained campaign by New Zealand women's organisations. The women who worked for the Act's repeal had two fundamental objections with it. First, the legislation was essentially a regulation of prostitution. Under the Act women were allowed to continue to work as prostitutes if they did not pose a threat to the health of the male client: prostitutes were tolerated if clean, but punished if not. Prostitution was opposed on moral grounds and so was any legislation that could be interpreted as condoning it.²⁵

²³R.Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of Women of New Zealand 1896-1920*, Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1996, p.87.

²⁴S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.123.

²⁵A.Levesque, "Prescribers and Rebels: Attitudes to Europeans Women's Sexuality in New Zealand, 1860-1916", in B.Brookes, C.MacDonald, M.Tennant (Eds.), *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, Wellington, Allen and Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986, p.10.

Secondly, the legislation punished an infected woman, but made no mention of infected males. There was a belief in feminist circles that this Act was not only degrading to women, but that it also made it safe for men to sin.²⁶

The WCTU's 1910 campaign demonstrated how women's organisations were beginning to link moral reform, such as the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, to the nation. The WCTU set the Act's repeal firmly within a prevailing nationalistic paradigm: the democratic and progressive nation.²⁷ It was argued that the presence of the Contagious Diseases Act on New Zealand's statute books was "a disgrace to our progressive legislation".²⁸ In a letter to Sir Joseph Ward congratulating him upon the final repeal of the legislation, Lovell-Smith again cast the argument in the context of the democratic progressive nation, when she argued that women celebrated the repeal of the Act, but:

Not alone as women, but as members of the whole community which has with some reason considered itself progressive, the Union has felt keenly the stigma attached to the Dominion by the presence of the Contagious Diseases Act on the Statute Book.²⁹

Earlier in that year, 1910, Lovell Smith had cast the repeal of the act within another prevailing image of national identity when she argued that the Act's repeal was

²⁶S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.122.

²⁷New Zealanders took pride in what they perceived to be their progressive country. They believed that by choosing to emigrate the early inhabitants of the New World had demonstrated qualities of initiative, adventurousness and experimentation. It was these qualities that many believed lay at the root of New Zealand's willingness to experiment with social legislation - to become social laboratories. A series of social reforms from the 1890s onward led New Zealanders to view themselves as progressive countries where "justice for all classes" existed. In 1902 William Pember Reeves chronicled the legislation in both countries concerning labour regulations, old age pensions and the "giving of the vote" to women. This publication served to further entrench the myth.

²⁸M.B.Lovell-Smith to Secretary of W.C.T.U Port Chalmers, Miss Menelance, May 1910, NCW Archives, Christchurch Branch, W.C.T.U Letter Book - Legal and Parliamentary Branch, 1910-1913.

²⁹M.B.Lovell-Smith to Sir Joseph Ward, 15 November 1910, NCW Archives, Christchurch Branch, W.C.T.U Letter Book - Legal and Parliamentary Branch, 1910-1913. On that same day Lovell-Smith also

crucial to the maintenance of the “healthy country”. In a letter to the *Evening Post* of 1910 Lovell-Smith rebutted the argument that the repeal of the legislation was “against the health, physical and mental, of numbers of New Zealanders”.³⁰ Instead she argued that health included moral well-being also.³¹ In making this linkage Lovell Smith was also highlighting how the moral health of the nation, that women had been charged with, was crucial to the New Zealand nation, as well as physical health.

RACE BETTERMENT AND PLUNKET METHODS

In addition to participating in the nation as moral mothers, New Zealand women had a crucial role to play as the physical mothers of the coming generations. The Mothers’ Union, the YWCA, the Girl Peace Scouts and the Society for the Protection of Women and Children were all active in equipping New Zealand women with the requisite skills to carry out this task. These women’s organisations were not in opposition to Truby King and his Plunket Society, on the contrary, they were central to the dissemination of such ideas. These organisations imparted on their members the importance of women, and the responsibility that motherhood, whether fulfilled or potential, had placed on women.³²

With this responsibility in mind, the Mothers’ Union set about educating its members on health matters, with the hope that they would become better mothers. The organisers of the Union held an express hope that their message and instruction was

set the arguments in these terms in another letter: M.B.Lovell-Smith to Hon. Dr. Findlay KC, 15 November 1910.

³⁰M.B.Lovell-Smith to the Editor, *The Evening Post*, 20 July 1910, NCW Archives, Christchurch Branch, W.C.T.U Letter Book - Legal and Parliamentary Branch, 1910-1913.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1903-1912, 21 October 1908.

reaching the desired target. In 1906 the executive discussed the “power the Mothers’ Union should be in our land”, and strategies to ensure the regular attendance of young mothers with children of an impressionable age.³³ It was these women who the Union sought to reach in order to ensure that the mothers of the young were schooled in the techniques that they considered were needed for successful mothering.

One year prior to the formation of the Plunket Society the Christchurch executive resolved that instruction be given on the feeding and proper care of infants. Truby King and his registered nurse were requested to write a pamphlet on this subject that would be “printed in an attractive form and circulated”.³⁴ The following year, 1907, the women of the Mothers’ Union received such instruction through a lecture from Dr Truby King on the subject of the preservation of infant life.³⁵ In this lecture he told the assembled mothers that so many of the diseases that “carry off infants” are traceable to improper food. In the year of the formation of the Plunket Society, Truby King, stressed the need for humanised milk if a mother found herself unable to nurse her child. In 1909 Doctor Eleanor Baker was invited to deliver a series of lectures to the mothers on the subject of sickness and health.³⁶ Continuing with health education, the executive arranged in 1912 for Nurse Maude to give lectures to the mothers.³⁷



³³ Ibid, 28 August 1906.

³⁴ Ibid, 25 October, 1916.

³⁵ Ibid, 1903-1912, 28 May 1907.

³⁶ Ibid,, 1903-1912, 23 May 1909.

³⁷ Ibid, August 1912 and October 1912.

The YWCA also saw one of its first objects as the production of skilled mothers, and the fitting of women for their “important place in the home”.³⁸ Miss Anderson, speaking to the 1913 National YWCA of Australasia conference, outlined what she considered to be the woeful state of affairs that existed in young women’s instruction. Modern young women may have been receiving instruction in Latin, painting, and parsing, but crucial instruction in relation to the future role of young women as mothers was being left “to her own powers of absorption”. Many a young woman, argued Anderson, was deficient in knowledge of the care of her own body, the significance of her own sex, the proper care of infants, the moral training of children, food principles, methods of housekeeping, how to keep husbands happy, and domestic gardening of both flowers and vegetables.³⁹

The solution to this situation, in Anderson’s mind, was the instruction that the YWCA could offer to produce better mothers and therefore healthier children. It was the lectures and classes that the YWCA offered in domestic skills that would serve to strengthen the home. The YWCA regarded this as especially important as the “home did not culminate in the physical and the material”, rather the home was viewed as a unit in civic life.⁴⁰ The domestic skills that the Association sought to indoctrinate their young membership with were explicitly aimed at preparing them for motherhood in both the physical and practical senses. The lecture program that Anderson referred to concentrated on cookery, laundering, sewing, home-nursing, personal and sex hygiene, and child rearing. Excellence in these motherhood skills was encouraged by way of

³⁸Miss Esther Anderson, “The Woman in the Home” delivered at the National Young Women’s Christian Association of Australasia, Report of the 3rd Triennial Conference, Melbourne, 23-28 October 1913, p.64, 94-020-3.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid,p.67.

competitions.⁴¹ From around the 1910s the scope of this work was extended. In 1913 the Christchurch branch of the YWCA resolved to extend their lecture programme to include: care and training of children; home planning and management; and other subjects of practical use to girls.⁴²

The Society for the Protection of Women and Children, that was usually more interested in legislative reform to advance the cause of women, was also involved in the dissemination of Plunket ideas and methods. In 1907 the Society also received a lecture from Truby King on the subject of the preservation of infant life, and expressed their pleasure at the fact that Fresh Food and Ice Company were now supplying humanised milk.⁴³ The following year, 1908, the annual report reported that the scope of the Society's work had been extended to include special matters relating to the health of mothers and the preservation of infant life.⁴⁴ At the suggestion of Lady Plunket, it was decided to elect a separate executive committee, with an independent organisation under the name of The Society for the Promotion of the Health of Women and Children.⁴⁵ Motherhood, and the need for healthy and well trained mothers, was considered to be sufficiently important to prompt the Society for the Protection of Women and Children to widen their scope of activity. This shift on the part of the organisation illustrates how important motherhood was to women, and the campaign to further the cause of women.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²*Outline Sketch of the Young Women's Christian Association in Australasia*, Sydney, National Board of the YWCA of Australasia, 1913, p.40.

⁴³Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Wellington Branch, 10th Annual Report, 1907, p.6.

⁴⁴Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Wellington Branch, 11th Annual Report, 1908, p.6.

⁴⁵Ibid.

The majority of the work of women's organisations up until 1906 was directed towards young women who had already achieved a certain level of independence from their families, but in the period from 1906 there was an increased desire to become more involved in the "character" training of adolescent girls. It is in this light that we need to examine the formation of both the YWCA's Hearth Fire Movement and forerunner to the Girl Guides, The Girl Peace Scouts. Both of these movements for young girls aimed to instil domestic values into their young members, and as such these movements were fundamental in the training of future mothers of the nation and empire. Through a case study of these youth movements, it is possible to see instruction in both moral and physical motherhood taking place.

THE GIRL PEACE SCOUTS AND THE HEARTH FIRES

Cossgrove returned from the South African War after a meeting with Robert Baden-Powell and founded the Boy Scouts in New Zealand. In 1908 his daughter Muriel Cossgrove had alerted her father to the fact that young girls also desired a similar organisation. Cossgrove obliged by rewriting the scout manual in more feminine terms.⁴⁶ The movement that emerged was intensely patriotic and loyal to Britain. The girls learnt the military and political structures of the Empire's nations, and were well schooled on the composition of the Union Jack.⁴⁷

The simple "feminisation" of the manual helps to explain the seemingly "masculine" nature of the manual and some of the activities outlined for the girls. *Peace Scouting for Girls* is littered with tales of military heroism dating from the Knights of

⁴⁶S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.118.

⁴⁷D.Cossgrove, *Peace Scouting for Girls*, 1910, pp.153-57, ATL 88-130-26/01. The development of the New Zealand Girl Peace Scouts was different to the development of the British based Girl Guides Association. This point is further developed in chapter five of this thesis.

old and spanning up to the South African War. Girl members were told through their manual that they could not “do better than follow the example of these men [the Knights of Old] who made the tiny British nation one of the best and greatest the world has ever seen”.⁴⁸ As part of his “feminisation” of the manual Cossgrove included a section on pioneering women of the empire who had helped to make the empire “great”.⁴⁹ The activities outlined for the girls are an odd mixture of vigorous pursuits such as camping, pathfinding, signalling, and despatch carrying. In this respect, there was little or no difference in the manual that young boys and girls were using. Both genders were being inculcated into imperial and national loyalty through the promotion of national myths.

Coney argues that the YWCA’s Hearth Fire Movement was more “domesticated” in nature than the Girl Peace Scouts.⁵⁰ On the surface this was certainly true, but fundamentally the two movements were working towards a common goal. Both movements sought to produce young women, future mothers of the nation, who were physically prepared for motherhood, and skilled in the new methods of motherhood. From a young age young girls were instructed through these movements on the “best” methods for raising a baby, their bodies to be moulded to the ideal of the “good” maternal body.

Important gender differences did, however, exist between the manuals of the two organisations. In addition to be trained in “masculine” pursuits such as camping, the young women of the Girl Peace Scouts were subjects of a campaign to produce useful women for the nation and the empire. The girls’ manual outlined the skills of home-

⁴⁸Ibid,p.21.

⁴⁹Ibid,p.18.

⁵⁰S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.70.

nursing, first aid, and care of infants. Through the section on “care of infants”, the new Plunket methods of childcare were disseminated to the adolescent girls.⁵¹ Central tenets of the Plunket philosophy, such as the regular feeding of infants, and the importance of mothers’ milk, were imparted on the girls.⁵² As with other women’s organisations, such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Girl Peace Scouts were taught that if mothers’ milk was not able to be provided for baby, then, according to King’s rules, a substitute had to be prepared. The young members were informed that if the mother wished to rear the child on Humanised milk, they must be shown how to prepare it by a “Plunket” nurse, or buy a “Plunket Pamphlet”.⁵³ Girls were also encouraged to take badges in topics such as knowing how to wash and feed a baby. Cossgrove was adamant that young girls should learn these useful skills.⁵⁴ Many in the movement believed that the prophecy that the Girl Peace Scouts would be a “Godsend to the nation” seemed likely to be fulfilled.⁵⁵

As an organisation, the Girl Peace Scouts were explicit in the nature of their work. In answer to whether the work of the movement was “rescue” or “constructive”, the official answer was “both”.⁵⁶ The stated aim of the organisation was to create in all classes a body of “disciplined, capable, true-hearted earnest-minded women to be the wives and mothers of the next generation.”⁵⁷ It was rescue work in that it “rescued”

⁵¹Ibid, pp.63-70.

⁵²Ibid, p.65.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Record of the Girl Peace Scouts - Rotorua branch scrapbook 24 November - 22 July 1921, 2 October 1915, unsourced, 88-130-01/20.

⁵⁵The Girl Peace Scout Movement: A Summary, p.10, undated, MS-Papers 88-130-3/1(6).

⁵⁶Ibid, p.4.

⁵⁷Ibid.

many girls “who would probably fall by the way”, and constructive in that its aims and objects were unlimited in their application.⁵⁸ The organisers saw their organisation as training women to “become good, useful, and noble women, with a love for home life and an appreciation of the duties of womanhood that no other organisation could hope to teach them”.⁵⁹

The work of the organisation fell on the environmentalist side of the eugenics movement. Those within the organisation believed that young girls, no matter what their class background, could be trained to be good future mothers. In a paper written by Mrs Royd Garlick, a former president of the Wellington Council, these views are blatantly articulated.

There has been a great deal of talk and many lectures given lately on the subject of heredity, and the statistics mentioned of marriages amongst the unfit,...but we think it would be far better to talk less and do more in the homes, to find out and arrest the cause of these terrible effects. And surely the time has come when every woman, no matter what her social standing may be, should say to herself, “I will clean up my own house, then do all that I can to help clean up the houses of those people who cannot do it for themselves.”⁶⁰

The home, the centre of family life, was where the Girl peace Scouts saw its opportunity to improve the race. For women such as Mrs Garlick, it was not talk and academic posturing on heredity and procreation amongst the “unfit” that would lead to a morally and physically improved nation. Instead, this was to be achieved through all women, not just those of the middle and upper classes, firstly improving themselves, and then aiding those unable to help themselves. This sentiment was heavily grounded

⁵⁸Ibid,p.5.

⁵⁹Ibid,p.6.

⁶⁰Ibid,p.7.

in a belief in respectability and self help, but cut across a desire for collective action to solve the problem, or save the race.

Although the organisation was heavily influenced by the “masculine” philosophy and activities of the Boy Scouts, ultimately the Girl Peace Scouts was dedicated to developing girls who would be good future mothers. It was the “maternal instinct” that this organisation sought to encourage in even “the youngest child”.⁶¹ The movement aimed at the moral, intellectual, and physical improvement of its members. To this end *Peace Scouting for Girls* told girls that a Peace Scout should observe the laws of health. According to the handbook every morning, if possible, girls were to “spend a few minutes with a pair of dumb-bells, or with closed hands in vigorous arm and body exercises” and ever alternate morning she was to massage her chest and abdomen.⁶² This was done with the aim of developing the chest, which would make for better breast feeding in later years. Members were also instructed, in no uncertain terms, that they should not wear corsets.⁶³

Formed in 1914, the Hearth Fire Movement was imported to New Zealand from Canada. The central motif of the organisation was “the hearth fire”, the heart of home and family. The aims of the organisations were; helpfulness, happiness, health, and home-making”. The uniform of the organisation consisted of a Dutch cap and frilled apron.⁶⁴ Both the uniform and the central motif of the organisation signified the club’s domestic orientation. Girl members earned awards for skill in a particular domestic art,

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²*Peace Scouting for Girls*, pp19-20.

⁶³Ibid,p.19.

⁶⁴C.Simpson, “The Social History of the Christchurch Young Women's Christian Association 1883-1930”, Master of Arts in Sociology, University of Canterbury, 1984, pp.245-246. Neither Simpson or Coney offer an explanation as to why a Dutch cap was part of the uniform.

and as with the Girl Peace Scouts, were presented with a badge to wear on their uniform.⁶⁵ The movement was for girls aged 12-18. The girls were divided into groups of twelve with the Guardian of the Fire, a mature woman, as leader. During meetings the Guardian would deliver lectures to the girls on topics such as hygiene, care and management of babies, and household work.⁶⁶ Also, as with the Girl Peace Scouts, as the realisation that healthy maternal bodies produced healthy babies gained momentum, physical exercise was introduced. In order to progress to a higher level within the club, girls had to win “honour” points. Simpson cites the case of Grace Staples, a member of the “Koa” Hearth Fire Club. In order to gain her “honour” points, Grace completed sixteen tasks, one quarter of these could be described as domestic.⁶⁷ This was a club for young girls and women that clearly aimed to produce better mothers for the future.

IMMIGRATION

Just as the work of women’s organisations in the areas of social purity and health was concerned with creating a nation that was morally, physically, and racially pure, so was the work of several women’s organisations who concerned themselves with immigration. As the work in the areas of social purity and health, women’s work in immigration also assigned women a “maternal” role. As providers of care and networks to newly arrived immigrants, women, and women’s organisations, helped ensure that the racial make-up of the nation was Anglo-Saxon. By providing these services, women’s organisations were making New Zealand an attractive destination for

⁶⁵S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.72.

⁶⁶Simpson, p.246.

⁶⁷Ibid, p.98.

intending British female immigrants. Yurav Davis has suggested that in settler societies there exists implicit, if not explicit, hierarchies of desirability of “origin” which underlie its nation building process.⁶⁸ In this way the work of women’s organisations was crucial to the creation of the nation.

As a white settler colony, immigration played a key role in the development of New Zealand. Since 1840 successive governing bodies had made it their task to actively recruit immigrants. When the Vogel government delivered their 1870 ten year development program aimed to revive the flagging economy, immigration was a key factor in the plan.⁶⁹ Almost exclusively, these immigrants were from the United Kingdom, so much so that in 1911, of the Pakeha population, 98 percent were of British “stock”.⁷⁰ There was a clear desire to create a colony that was British, or to contemporary minds “racially pure”.

As they were perceived as a threat to the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race, it was Asians, and in particular the Chinese, who New Zealanders most wanted to exclude from their country. The clean souls and bodies venerated by the social purity and health campaigners were in many ways not only symbolically, but literally white. The “character” of a nation’s citizens became an important component in the building of a nation that was moral as well as prosperous. “White” people were seen as having more character than other races. An important component of “character” was sexual morality,

⁶⁸N.Yuval-Davis, “Women and the Biological Reproduction of “The Nation”, *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.19, No.1, 1996, pp.17-24. In New Zealand, Australia, and Canada regulations controlling the origin of immigrants was explicit.

⁶⁹R.Dalziel, “The Politics of Settlement”, in G.Rice (Ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.103.

⁷⁰S.Constantine, “Immigration and the making of New Zealand, 1918-1939”, in S.Constantine (Ed.), *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990, p.121.

and the British considered that the Anglo Saxon race was more capable of controlling its instincts than other “races”. Writing of the Canadian experience Mariana Valverde argues that settler societies had no desire to admit immigrants of the “savage races”, who were considered incapable of controlling their desires.⁷¹ It was in this light that many Pakeha New Zealanders viewed the few Chinese immigrants in the country. They were portrayed as debauched and drug-ridden. Many chose to believe that they were inclined to the worst vices and perversions, and therefore a threat to white womanhood.⁷² Official restrictions on Chinese immigration first appeared in 1881 when a ten pound per immigrant poll tax was levied. In 1887 the tax was raised to a one hundred pound levy.⁷³ In the period 1906-1914 it was not only these official restrictions that ensured that those immigrating to New Zealand were drawn from the British race, the voluntary immigration organisations were exercising their own “effective forms of selection and exclusion”.⁷⁴

Women’s organisations in the late nineteenth century were active in the area of immigration. British based organisations established themselves in the white settler societies, and through these networks ensured that it was women of Anglo Saxon stock who were settling in colonies such as New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. One of these societies was the Girls’ Friendly Society. Ten years after its beginnings, an emigration department was established in 1885 to provide for the safe transit of female immigrants,

⁷¹M. Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, Toronto, McClland and Stewart, 1991, pp.104-105.

⁷²P.J.Gibbons, “The Climate of Opinion” in G.Rice (Ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.310.

⁷³J.Bassett, “Dark Satanic Mills”, in J.Binney, J.Bassett, and E.Olssen (Eds.), *The People and the Land, Te Tanata me Te Whenua*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 1990, p.189.

⁷⁴J.Graham, “Settler Society”, in G.Rice (Ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.114.

and put them in touch with clergymen at the port of their arrival.⁷⁵ This department was run by the Hon. Mrs Joyce, who also served on the British Women's Emigration Association. In a 1926 history of the Society, Mrs Joyce is praised for her capacity for "thinking imperially" in the widest sense of the word, not only did she firmly believe that the Empire should prevail and spread, but that it should be populated "by those capable of making it truly great".⁷⁶ The practical way Mrs Joyce and the Girls' Friendly Society saw to achieve this aim was through providing advice, and networks for girl members who wished to settle in the colonies of the empire.

The idea of the emigration department was first mooted in 1883, and by 1884 the willing co-operation of societies in New Zealand, Natal, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, and Canada was secured. One of the first practical measures that the newly formed department undertook was the selection of a label for the luggage of the girls who were to go out in protected parties. All girls who emigrated in the society's parties went out with the emblem of the anchor cross emblazoned on their luggage, and as many girls noted this made their trip less fraught. According to Heath-Stubbs, in some cases the luggage went through customs departments without anything being opened.⁷⁷ From these early days Mrs Joyce urged on colonial governments the advantages to the colonies of the immigration of girls who had "been under good teaching since childhood". For their part, colonial governments admitted the

⁷⁵B.Harrison, "For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls Friendly Society 1874-1920", *Past and Present*, No.61, November 1973, p.126.

⁷⁶Mary Heath-Stubbs, *Friendships Highway*, London, 1926, p.70, ATL, 85-075-02/16.

⁷⁷*Ibid*,p.71.

value of the Girls' Friendly Society in producing the "right sort for making up their part in the world".⁷⁸

Once societies had been established in the settler colonies, and the support of the colonial governments received, the British Girls' Friendly Society turned its hand to promoting Canada, the Australian colonies, and New Zealand, as desirable places for female immigration. The magazine of the Society, *Friendly Work*, was one means that was employed to disseminate both practical advice to intending immigrants, and to inform the girls of life in the colonies. As head of the emigration department, Mrs Joyce had a column in the magazine entitled "Letters on Emigration". In one of these columns in November of 1885, Mrs Joyce advised girls emigrating to Canada to take extra warm clothing as the "season for emigration to Canada is practically over". She also provides the Toronto address of the Immigrant Servants Home that was now open to any respectable unmarried female emigrant. For girls intending to emigrate to Sydney, she strongly advised that they send their new addresses to the Girls' Friendly Society in Sydney immediately upon their arrival. They could then be visited by an associate and advised of the classes and "other advantages" which the society offered its members.⁷⁹ Through the pages of this magazine, the emigration department could dish out "maternal" advice to the young women emigrants. Another function that *Friendly Work* fulfilled in terms of emigration was informing the girl members of life and conditions in the colonies. In 1889 the magazine ran a series of articles on "Our Sister Societies".

⁷⁸Ibid,p.72.

⁷⁹Mrs Joyce, "Letters on Emigration", *Friendly Work*, November 1885, p.175, 85-075-02/17.

These articles outlined many aspects of life, the spread of the Girls' Friendly Society, and the climate and geography of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.⁸⁰

One of the main tasks of the Girls' Friendly society in its early days in New Zealand was to provide support for young women emigrating to New Zealand. Society associates met all ships and trains arriving in Wellington, and from there provided a support and protection network. The young women were welcomed, given a cup of tea, and helped to find a "respectable" place to board until they were settled. Likewise the YWCA offered assistance for immigrant women from an early date.⁸¹ In 1908 the work of the organisation in meeting ships, and trains was formalised in the Travellers' Aid Department. Through this department the YWCA distributed lists of respectable boarding houses to the immigrant girls.⁸² This work in providing immediate accommodation to the women was crucial to the continuation and success of women's immigration. As Monk notes that reception homes were an early essential in women's migration. They sheltered the young women from wandering the streets all night, or sleeping rough as sometimes the new arrivals were ignorant as to where to find respectable lodgings.⁸³

The Girls' Friendly Society noted in 1910 that, of the girls using their Vivian Street lodge in Wellington, many were new arrivals in the Dominion.⁸⁴ It was work such as this that government wished to support through a state grant when they entered into

⁸⁰“Our Sister Societies: The GFS in Canada”, *Friendly Work*, August 1889, pp.116-119. “Our Sister Societies: The GFS in Australia”, *Friendly Work*, September 1889, pp.129-132. “Our Sister Societies: The GFS in New Zealand”, *Friendly Work*, November 1889, pp.163-166.

⁸¹S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.97.

⁸²Simpson, p.216.

⁸³U.Monk, *New Horizons: A hundred years of women's migration*, London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1963, p.57.

negotiations with the Girls' Friendly Society in 1913. The proposal the government came to the society with was that the two beds be reserved at the society's lodge for girl immigrants arriving from England and in return the government was to pay an annual sum.⁸⁵ It would seem that the plan came to fruition as the annual report of 1915 records a payment of one hundred pounds from the government for immigration work.⁸⁶

However, not surprisingly, this scheme did not please the YWCA. The Auckland board were quick to point out that the Girls' Friendly Society was an Anglican institution and as such catered for Anglican women.⁸⁷ The YWCA, asked why, a non-denominational organisation, were not appointed as subsidised agents for the government. In Wellington a deputation representing the YWCA in the four ports visited Mr Bell, minister of immigration, to express their shock at the decision. Bell yielded and decided that each society would receive one hundred and fifty pounds to distribute as each saw fit.⁸⁸ The level of immigration that the government funding was in place to support was only to last a couple of years after the grants had been made as World War I meant immigration all but ceased during this period. In the period following the war, however, immigration received a renewed impetus.⁸⁹

⁸⁴Girls' Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1909-1910, p.6, 85-075-03/02.

⁸⁵Girls' Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1912-1913, p.5, 85-075-03/02.

⁸⁶Girls' Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1914-1915, p.4, 85-075-03/02.

⁸⁷It would seem that in fact the aim of the Girls' Friendly Society was to reach a wider group of women than just their members. The Annual Report of 1911 states that Sister Constance, a member of the GFS council, had been appointed as a representative on the Wellington Church Immigration Society. Her task was to meet all boats coming onto Wellington from England, and welcome all girls, whether GFS or not, in the church's name and give them any advice or help they might need. Girls' Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1910-1911, p.4, 85-075-03/02.

⁸⁸S.Coney, *Every Girl*, pp.97-98.

⁸⁹This renewed immigration is fully covered in chapter five of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

The period 1906-1914 was marked by a shift in emphasis in the work of the women's organisations. In the period leading up to World War I women as mothers, were gaining more significance to the nation. Central to this was the fact that women continued to constitute themselves as the moral mothers of the nation. In their campaigns for the purification, or "feminisation" of community standards, women argued that they were working to improve the race. Women were strengthened in this role through the support of respectable men such as Colonel Cossgrave, and clergyman, Archdeacon Harper. In the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, women's organisations found that they were able to use the role as moral mothers of the nation to work to further the cause of women. Women's organisations were also a crucial, if officially overlooked, part of the campaign to inculcate women into the new "scientific motherhood". As women positioned themselves as, and were positioned as, the physical mothers of the nation, women's organisations gained more value to the nation, as it was within these organisations that young women learnt the requisite skills to mother the coming representatives of the race. Aware of their importance to the community and ultimately the nation, women's organisations, such as the YWCA, argued for funding to further their cause.

Maternal citizenship was not limited to child-bearing. Those who were no longer physically able to produce babies for the nation and the empire could construct themselves as surrogate mothers to potential mothers. The leaders of organisations such as the YWCA, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Mothers' Union, and the Girl Peace Scouts were fulfilling a maternal role through their work with the young, often working class women, who came under their care. This was also the case with the women who

were involved in working with young immigrant women. Organisations such as the Girls' friendly Society and the YWCA provided these coming women with shelter and protection, and also with strong maternal figures.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN DEFENCE OF NATION AND EMPIRE: 1914-1918

“We in the west”, according to Jean Bethke Elshtain, “are heirs of a tradition that assumes an affinity between women and peace, between men and war”.¹ As this chapter will show, however, this is a binary opposition that did not reflect the experiences of New Zealand women during the years 1914-1918. Rather than focus on women as “beautiful souls” who were opposed to the war, this chapter will demonstrate how New Zealand women, through their organisations, were complicit in the war effort. This complicity was found through women fulfilling their traditional maternal role. The gendered ideology of war dictated that rather than participate in the male space of the battlefield, women could best serve King and Country in their role as mothers. It was through heroic maternal sacrifice, as caring nurturing volunteers, and as moral mothers of the nation, that New Zealand women responded to the call to defend the nation and the empire. This complicity offered women a chance to further cement the central role of the maternal figure in the New Zealand nation.

The essentialised notion of women as naturally peaceful was not the case in New Zealand during World War I. In her article dealing with women and the peace movement, Megan Hutching describes the women involved in this campaign as “a small minority of New Zealand women”.² Anderson, in her discussion of women’s attitudes to

¹J.Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*, Basic Books, New York, 1987, p.4.

²M.Hutching, “ ‘Mothers of the World’: Women, Peace and Arbitration in Early Twentieth Century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.27, No.2, October 1993, p.173.

the Great War, claims that anti-war groups never had a huge following, and that the membership of groups committed to peace often crossed over with each other. According to Anderson, membership of the Canterbury Women's Institute, The National Peace Council, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, shared common membership of a few dedicated and determined individuals.³

The 1916 visit of Adela Pankhurst to New Zealand sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom certainly stands to support the argument for women's lack of enthusiasm in the war effort. Pankhurst's visit was marked by a general lack of enthusiasm. Although former National Council of Women members Ada Wells and Sarah Saunders Page helped to arrange meetings for her in Christchurch, none of the other early Council activists appear to have been involved. More significantly, the *White Ribbon*, did not even mention her visit, despite the fact that she also delivered several lectures on the English Suffrage movement.⁴ The silence surrounding her visit was indicative of the fact that some New Zealand feminist organisations supported the war, and did not want to be construed as unpatriotic by the general public.⁵

³M.Anderson, "The Female Front: The Attitudes of Otago Women Towards the Great War 1914-1918", B.A(Hons.) Research Essay, University of Otago, 1990, p.94.

⁴R. Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament: The National Council of the Women of New Zealand 1896-1920*, Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1996 ,pp.101-102.

⁵ It should be noted, however, that the war years provided "a new focus for working class and radical women". With the introduction of conscription in 1916 some women became involved in the agitation opposing the policy, see: D. Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History*, Auckland, Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996, pp52-53. Another woman of note to oppose the war was Te Puea. She was one of the key figures in leading the Waikato people to refuse to enlist. For a detailed discussion on this see: M.King, *Te Puea: A Biography*, Auckland, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977.

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

On 6 August 1914 Lady Liverpool, wife of the Governor, provided an answer to the question that many New Zealand women were asking: what can we do? In an appeal to the women of New Zealand, Annette Liverpool asked that “at the moment of our Empire’s need” women “assist me in trying to provide any necessities which may be required”.⁶ Lady Liverpool envisaged the creation of a fund in every centre under a committee of women. In the larger towns it was hoped that Mayoresses would assume responsibility for the creation and organisation of such committees.⁷ The hastiness of the response by New Zealand women is best illustrated by the fact that this answer was provided six days before enlistment began for men.⁸ In their droves women all over the country answered the call of Annette Liverpool. By the end of the war the official tally of women’s patriotic organisations was an impressive 568..⁹ This chapter will examine one of these organisations, the Otago Women’s Patriotic Association (OWPA), in order to ascertain the activities, and attitudes of New Zealand women, and how these linked to the nation.

In 1917, the presidents of the committees from throughout the country formed a common committee known as the Federated Women’s Patriotic Societies of New Zealand. This body, with Lady Liverpool as its patroness, met periodically in

⁶undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 3, August 1913-1914, p.76.

⁷Ibid, see also S.J.Piesse, “Patriotic Welfare in Otago: A History of the Otago Patriotic and General Welfare Association 1914-1950 and the Otago Provincial Patriotic Council 1939-”, Masters Thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1981, p.63.

⁸C.Pugsley, *On the Fringes of Hell: New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War*, Auckland, Hodder and Stoughton, 1991, p.9.

⁹Smaller branches were excluded from this figure. A list in the National Archives shows that more than 920 such organisations were in operation during the hostilities. A. Else, *Women Together: A History of Women’s Organisations in New Zealand*, Wellington, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, p. 292.

Wellington.¹⁰ It did not, however, exert complete control over the already existent patriotic organisations. It would seem that organisations such as the OWPA still exercised a great deal of autonomy after the 1917 federation, and that the executive of individual organisations were still ultimately in control of their organisations' activities. In April of 1917 the OWPA received a letter from the Christchurch Lady Liverpool Committee requesting that the Otago organisation join in sending leather waistcoats to Trentham for the reinforcements leaving New Zealand.¹¹ After the matter had received the consideration of the executive, it was decided that the OWPA would not fall in with the scheme suggested by Christchurch.¹²

The women who were involved in the patriotic organisations were largely drawn from the classes with leisure time, and experience in organisation and administration. In the case of the Otago Women's Patriotic Association, Miss Mary Downie Stewart and Miss Jean Burt serve as examples. Both of these women were from prominent and financially secure Dunedin families.¹³ Sarah Piesse argues that the women elected to the executive of the OWPA constituted the "upper layer" of Dunedin society, and that almost without exception they came from the leading families of the province.¹⁴ From the outset, the Association was planned for women with leisure time in mind. In August of 1914 it was decided that the office bearers of the association would meet in the Town

¹⁰undated,unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, vo.5, April 1917-October 1917, p.40.

¹¹ OWPA Minute Book, January 1916 - October 1917, 4 April 1917, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

¹²Ibid, 9 May 1917.

¹³Jean Burt was the daughter of one of the owners of the Dunedin foundry firm A&T Burt. For further information on Mr. A. Burt see *The Cyclopædia of New Zealand*, Vol.4, pp.321-322.

¹⁴Piesse,p.63.

Hall to deal “with urgent business” every morning at 10.00am.¹⁵ The very time of meeting excluded women of the working classes from participating, as they would have either been involved in paid employment, or would have lacked the resources to absent themselves from their homes and families at such an hour.

Despite this, there developed a myth that class distinctions disappeared in the face of adversity. In a 1914 article, one newspaper wrote of the “women’s war effort” that “class distinctions, creed divisions, [and] old feuds all disappear in the common trouble.”¹⁶ This myth of the classless response of New Zealand women was strengthened by Queen Mary’s thank you to the women of New Zealand, when she stated that she appreciated the ready response “of all classes in the community”.¹⁷ The OWPAs made an effort to include women of the working classes when they decided in October 1914 to offer a fifth meeting on Trafalgar Day. This extra meeting was to be held in the evening so that women who were working during the day had the opportunity of attending a meeting.¹⁸ This did nothing to alter the fact that at the top of the hierarchy of this organisation it was women of the leisured middle and upper classes who were making the decisions and running the organisation.

¹⁵ OWPAs Minute Book, 1914-1915, 12 August 1914 and 17 August 1914, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

¹⁶ undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 3, August 1913-1914, p.78.

¹⁷ undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 4. September 1914- September 1915, p.21. This myth mirrored the myth of the egalitarian army that held much currency for contemporaries. It was widely believed that the “caste distinctions” and the gulf between officers and men in the British army aroused contempt in the Anzacs. Many of the men thought the discipline and hierarchy of the Imperial force robbed men of their individuality and led to an immense gulf between men and officers. In the colonial ranks, it was said, the officers led from the front. Colonial officers were not averse to mixing with their men. Colonel Sommerville told the *Evening Post* “The colonial officer knew all his men, fraternised with them, chatted with them, and took an interest in them. There was none of this between the Imperial officer and Tommy, from whom the officer held strictly aloof.” The colonial troops, in a show of defiance against such a hierarchical relationship, refused to salute the British officers. The idea of an independent, masterless man prevailed in this setting. *J. Phillips* (1987), pp.165-168.

¹⁸ OWPAs Minute Book, 1914-1915, 10 October 1914, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

Just as the hierarchies of the women's organisations discussed elsewhere in thesis were exclusively Pakeha, both in terms of their ethnic membership and ideology, so too was the OWPA. However, Maori some women were also active participants in the provision of comforts for the troops. In 1915, Mirā Woodbine Pomare, wife of member of parliament, Dr. Maui Pomare, joined with Annette Liverpool and formed Lady Liverpool's and Mrs Pomare's Maori Soldiers fund to support the soldiers of the Maori Pioneer Contingent.¹⁹ Organised in a similar fashion to the Pakeha organisations, its work was carried out by twenty-eight Maori women's committees. In 1917 these were spread "from Port Awanui in the North to Otakau in the South", with more being formed.²⁰ Like the Pakeha women's organisations, there are important class connotations to note; in Mira Pomare it was a women of the upper class who headed the effort. Pomare had standing in both Pakeha and Maori circles, and through her husband had ready access to both Maori and Pakeha leaders.

Through Lady Liverpool and Mrs Pomare's Maori Soldiers Fund, Maori women were able to provide the men of the Maori pioneer contingent with care parcels similar to the parcels that the Pakeha organisations were providing for all New Zealand soldiers. In 1917 it was decided to send one hundred parcels for the Rarotongans serving in Egypt, and one thousand parcels for the Maori soldiers serving in France. These parcels were not replicas of the parcels that other women's organisations were sending out to the troops. The parcels that the Maori women provided contained delicacies that the Maori soldiers would appreciate, such as mutton birds.²¹

¹⁹Else, pp.23-25.

²⁰undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 5, April 1917-October 1917, pp.41 and 50.

²¹Ibid, p.50.

The Maori women's organisation was financed through both street collections and entertainment evenings. The Pakeha OWPA aided the Maori organisation by assisting in their street appeals. In 1918 the executive of the OWPA noted that the funds of Lady Liverpool's and Mrs Pomare's Maori Soldiers Fund had "become very low". As they regarded the regular provision of comforts to the Maori troops as "very necessary", they offered their assistance.²² With "Maori collectors assisting at each stall" in September of 1918, the women of the OWPA sold badges featuring a tiki and the words "help our Maori Comrades".²³

Entertainment evenings were also a popular method of fund raising for all the women's patriotic organisations, including the Maori women's organisation. The programme of a "Maori entertainment" evening held in the Wellington Town Hall in November of 1917 demonstrates how the Maori women's patriotic organisation was simultaneously working to advance the position of Maori people and to cast Maori culture within the imperial paradigm. One item in the evenings entertainment was a tableau entitled "Britannia and Her Warriors". This consisted of a group of "tattooed warriors in native garb, posed militantly around the figure of Britannia", and was described by one newspaper as "very effective".²⁴ During the interval of the evening's entertainment there was an auction of a Union Jack made "of the bark of the Whauwhi tree, two Maori mats, and three Maori kits of excellent design and workmanship".²⁵ The

²²OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 20 August 1918, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

²³OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 27 August 1918, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum, and Miscellaneous Ribbons, Lapel Badges, series six.

²⁴undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 6, 1917-1918, pp.84.

²⁵"Programme of Maori Entertainment, Town Hall Wellington, 7 November 1917 - in aid of Lady Liverpool's and Mrs Pomare's Maori Soldiers Fund", Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 6, 1917-1918, pp.84

melding together in the evenings' entertainment of the symbols of imperial culture, Britannia and the Union Jack, and Maori culture, the "warriors" and the weaving, showed how some Maori women were working to advance and secure the position of Maori people within the dominant culture.

This view was made clear later in the evening when Maui Pomare addressed the gathering. He commended the work of the women and the fact that the appeal did not in any way interfere with the Pakeha efforts. To Pomare this was important as "God helped those who themselves", and to Pomare's mind this was precisely what the women had been doing. He was especially proud of the fact that the Maori women's fund had paid all their own expenses and had all worked "faithfully and lovingly for the boys at the front".²⁶ In one sense, Maori women were fulfilling the same function as their Pakeha counterparts through the provision of comforts to the troops, but in another sense their work had very different political significance. Maori women's war efforts also need to read in light of the wider hope on the part of some Maori, such as Maui Pomare, that racial divisions in New Zealand would be eroded as the blood of Maori and Pakeha "mingled in the trenches at Gallipoli".²⁷ Maori women held a very different agenda to their Pakeha counterparts.

²⁶undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 6, 1917-1918, pp.84.

²⁷J.J.Phillips, "War and National Identity", in D.Novitz and B.Willmott (Eds.), *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Wellington, GP Books, 1989, p.97. It should be noted that this is very much a myth of New Zealand national identity. Lack of volunteers for the Maori contingent meant that men from Nuie and Rarotonga had to be enlisted. Analysis of those Maori who did join reveals, not surprisingly, that they overwhelmingly came from traditionally "loyal" iwi. In the Waikato the confiscation grievance led the Tainui people to refuse to serve. In the Ureweras Rua Kenana was accused of being pro-Kaiser and was held personally responsible for Tuhoe failing to enlist.

VOLUNTARY WORK AND THE NATION

The work of the women's voluntary organisations was a highly organised campaign that was not opposite to the National "official" effort. What the organisations produced in the way of clothing for the troops was decided upon in conjunction with both politicians and defence officials. At the beginning of the hostilities the product of New Zealand women's labour was destined for the British based Queen Mary Appeal. Her Excellency, Queen Mary, advised New Zealand women via Lady Liverpool, that it was socks and woven cholera belts that were required.²⁸ Within a matter of months Lady Liverpool issued a directive to New Zealand women, that in view of the "splendid contributions" that they had made to the Queen's appeal, the time had come to close the fund and concentrate "entirely on New Zealand troops on active service".²⁹ It was the young men of the nation, and not the empire, who the New Zealand women's organisations wished to support.

By 1915 the Defence department had taken over the outfitting of the troops, and therefore there was no longer the need of clothing donations from the Lady Liverpool fund. Instead, the women's organisations resolved to supply extras to the troops of socks, shirts, mittens, balaclavas, and comforters.³⁰ There was a clear desire on the part of the OWPA to avoid any cross over with the government in the provision of supplies to the troops. In August of 1915 the OWPA received a request from Lady Liverpool to help supply sheepskin coats for Otago soldiers on active service. The result of the ensuing discussion was that no decision should be made until it could be found out what

²⁸19 October 1914, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.21.

²⁹undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.35a.

³⁰undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.43.

the government intended doing on this matter. A wire was dispatched to Hon. James Allen, Minister of Defence, enquiring if sheepskin coats formed part of the winter equipment issued to soldiers.³¹ In September of that year the executive resolved to supply the soldiers from the Otago military district with these coats, as the government did not intend to include these garments as part of the winter equipment for the men.³²

Not only was the decision of what to produce highly organised, so too was the production of what was produced. The already mentioned, *Her Excellency's Knitting Book* ensured that New Zealand women were producing socks and other woollen comforts that were of a uniform nature.³³ This was also the situation with the production of the sheepskin coats that the OWPA decided to supply for Otago troops. This was in fact a nationwide campaign that aimed to provide fifteen thousand of the coats for winter use in the Dardenalles. To ensure that the men would be receiving coats that were uniform in nature, a common pattern was issued and the buckles were attached by a contractor.³⁴

The women's patriotic organisations demonstrated a clear desire to work for the good of the nation and the empire through their voluntary activities. Other women's organisations, such as the Mothers' Union, also saw their wartime activity as being of a direct benefit to the nation. In 1916 the Christchurch executive expressed their regret at the fact some branches had closed down. This was thought to be especially regretful "at

³¹ OWPA Minute Book, 1914-1915, 11 August 1915, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

³² OWPA Minute Book, 1914-1915, 3 September 1915, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

³³ undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.110.

³⁴ undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.109a.

a time when women's work and influence are of such vital importance to the nation".³⁵

Women saw their war efforts as being a part of the nation.

Through their war work, New Zealand women were expressing a shift to a national as well as an imperial loyalty. Other women's organisations, such as the Girl Peace Scouts, also gave concerts to raise money for the war effort. One such concert in Rotorua in 1915 featured a representation of Britannia in a tableau entitled "Britain and her Colonies".³⁶ Through this, the Peace Scouts were representing the emergent nationalism; a national identity set firmly within an imperial paradigm. It was through their voluntary organisations that women expressed both their national and imperial loyalty. A shift from an imperial loyalty to a more national loyalty is, however, detectable in these organisations during the war years. As already discussed at the outset of the war, it was to the British based Queen Mary Appeal that the fruits of New Zealand women's labour were directed. This was only to last only a matter of months, and later in 1914 it was decided that the comforts that the New Zealand women were producing should be devoted "entirely to the New Zealand troops on active service".³⁷ This shift of focus to a more national loyalty can also be detected in the expression of sympathy voiced at the start of the OWPA's committee meetings. From the early days of the war the committee preceded their meetings with an expression of sympathy for those "who had lost relatives and friends in defence of our Empire".³⁸ In July of 1917 this expression of sympathy had changed to "those whose dear ones have given their

³⁵Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1912 -1922, 29 August 1916.

³⁶25 May 1915, unsourced, Record of Girl Peace Scouts, Rotorua, 24 November - 22 June 1921, 88-130-01/2D.

³⁷undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.35a.

³⁸see for example OWPA Minute Book, 1914-1915, 3 September 1915, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

lives in the fight for the highest ideals of our nation”.³⁹ Other expressions of national loyalty were found in such occurrences as the occasion of the Grand Patriotic Concert that was organised by the Poverty Bay Women’s Patriotic Fund. One item on the program for that evening was the recitation of Kipling’s poem *The Native Born*.⁴⁰

WAR WORK AND MATERNALISM

The work that women undertook during the war years fell within the prescribed women’s role; women were fulfilling their maternal functions of care and nurture. The tasks that the women undertook were traditionally “feminine” in nature. Throughout the duration of the hostilities, it was to the provision of necessities and comforts for the troops to which the women’s organisations turned their hands. In particular the traditional female task of knitting became a focus in both the practical and symbolic senses of the women’s war effort. In the period 1914-1915 New Zealand women contributed 7,156 pairs of hand knitted socks to Queen Mary’s appeal.⁴¹ This level of commitment was maintained throughout the war years. The 1918 annual report of the OWPA states that between 31 March 1917 and 31 March 1918 the Otago organisation alone dispatched gift parcels that included 9,850 pairs of socks.⁴² Hand knitted comforts were in short supply for the men at the front. In a letter to the OWPA General Richardson mentions the shortage of woollen comforts in France, and the women of the

³⁹ OWPA Minute Book, January 1916-October 1917, 10 July 1917, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁴⁰Souvenir Programme, Grand Patriotic Concert, Saturday 19 December 1914 at the Garrison Hall, held under the auspices of the Poverty Bay Women's Patriotic Association, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.36.

⁴¹undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, pp.35a.

⁴²1918 Annual Report of the Otago and Southland Women's Patriotic Association, p.5, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

organisation conclude that their parcel scheme is the best way to ensure that the New Zealand soldiers do not have to go without.⁴³

The task of knitting also became symbolic of the efforts of the women. The traditionally feminine task became the focus of much of the verse that was composed about the role of women in wartime. The cover of Lady Liverpool's Knitting Book featured a verse that contained the sentiment that domestic tasks such as knitting were the way in which women could participate in the war effort. Through this verse, it is clear that women viewed their efforts as being part of the war movement, and not as something that was peripheral to the event that was happening on the other side of the world. As the verse states "we all must do our bit", and for women that was by fulfilling a traditionally maternal role:

For the Empire and for Freedom
We all must do our bit;
The men go forth and battle,
The women wait - and knit.⁴⁴

Knitting and the production of socks was not a theme isolated to this verse. Lady Liverpool's scrapbooks contain several other poems and verse that echo this theme.⁴⁵

In response to an international appeal, the New Zealand women's patriotic associations worked to raise money for the relief of Belgian refugees.⁴⁶ In September of 1914 the OWPA held a flower day in aid of the British and Belgian relief funds and

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.110.

⁴⁵See for example two poems entitled "Socks" by women in undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, pp.45a-46.

⁴⁶Else, p.306.

sixty one pounds was raised.⁴⁷ The children of Belgium were the subject of another more specialised campaign. “Crumb Cards” were sold by the OWPA that featured a portrait of the Queen of Belgium and the words “save my babies”. On the reverse side of the card the following message appeared:

Please don't forget, dear boys and girls
Whenever Meal time comes,
That Belgium's starving little waifs
Are grateful for your crumbs.
One crumb can save a dying child,
A morsel serve two,
And if a slice can feed them twice,
Think what a loaf can do.⁴⁸

This was a blatant emotional appeal to a New Zealand public with the loss of their sons at the forefront of its mind. The campaign was couched in language and ideas that emphasised the maternal nature of the women's war effort. By raising funds for this appeal the women of the OWPA were clearly displaying their traditional function of maternal care and nurture.

As the war progressed wounded soldiers began to return to New Zealand, and the women's organisations become involved in the care of these men. Women were viewed as the logical providers of care for the returned soldiers as “womanly” virtues, such as care and compassion, were required. In an article of 1919 one newspaper carried a report of Mr J.H. Gunson's address to a group of women. He informed those present that women “can do a great deal in the restoration of these men [returned soldiers] to

⁴⁷OWPA Minute Book, 1914-1915, 16 & 23 September 1914, May 1916, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁴⁸“Crumb Card”, undated, Miscellaneous Cards, Series five, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

civil life.”⁴⁹ The rationale for such a statement was that it was the womanly virtues of patience, good counsel and loving care that the returning soldiers needed.⁵⁰

As the wounded soldiers began to return to New Zealand the women of the OWPA took it upon themselves to provide puddings and sweets for the soldiers in the hospital once a week.⁵¹ In June of 1917 Miss Downie Stewart suggested to the OWPA that their organisation could do more for the returned soldiers and that one way to achieve this was to visit these soldiers in hospital. The committee took note of this and appointed a hospital visiting committee.⁵² In 1918 this work was extended, when the executive of the association voted in favour of their organisation establishing a hostel for soldier outpatients.⁵³ The continued care of the wounded soldiers by the OWPA can also be seen in the 1919 resolution of the organisation to supply the wages of a cook and an assistant cook for the special use of the soldiers in Dunedin Hospital.⁵⁴ The women of the OWPA were to provide comfort to the men who had been wounded fighting for nation and empire. By fulfilling the traditional maternal function of caregiver, the women of the OWPA were able to further participate in the event of war that was

⁴⁹undated, unsourced, “Soldiers in Civil Life - Influence of Women”, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 8, 6 June 1919 - 23 July 1919.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹ OWPA Minute Book, January 1916-October 1917, 3 May 1916, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁵²OWPA Minute Book, January 1916-October 1917, 16 July 1917, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁵³OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 15 October 1918, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁵⁴OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 20 May 1919, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum. On the disbanding of the fund one of the conditions that the women laid down on transferring their remaining funds to the all male Otago Patriotic and General Welfare Association was that the provision of a cook and “extra comforts” for the soldiers in Dunedin hospital be continued. OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 20 April 1920, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

perceived as crucial to the definition of New Zealand nationhood. Importantly women's participation was in gendered terms, they were providing a service that was viewed as distinctively feminine and maternal.

It was not only the wounded returning soldiers to whom the women of the OWPA extended their care and comfort. The OWPA believed that as many of the returned soldiers had "no mothers or sisters to see to their wants" it was their responsibility to "step in here" and do their best "to have every man who requires it" properly fixed up before he sets out to work.⁵⁵ The women viewed the care of returned soldiers as the responsibility of women as it was the maternal attributes of care and nurture that were called for. When the main body of soldiers returned to Dunedin on 16 March 1918 they were met by members of the OWPA committee. Each man was presented with a small parcel containing comforts and a card of welcome from the women's organisation.⁵⁶ By 1919, 1,566 soldiers had received parcels that contained shirts, undershirts, socks, handkerchiefs and, in some cases, pyjamas.⁵⁷

As the hostilities came to a end, the OWPA turned their attention to providing care and comfort of the returning soldiers. Once again women were fulfilling their traditional maternal role. The Dunedin Early Settlers' Hall, that had been the headquarters of the women's activities during the war years, was to remain open for the use of the returned soldiers. The women felt that the soldiers were in need of outdoor treatment, a canteen, and a resting place that would be open daily for their use. It was

⁵⁵1918 Annual Report of the Otago and Southland Women's Patriotic Association, p.8, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁵⁶OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 18 March 1919, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁵⁷1919 Annual Report of the Otago and Southland Women's Patriotic Association, p.11, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

finally resolved that the hall would remain open every day from two to five in the afternoon, with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, “for the entertainment of soldiers”.⁵⁸ A corner of the Early Settlers Hall was set aside for the exclusive use of the soldiers, who were “always given a hearty welcome.”⁵⁹

It was women, and women’s organisations, who took on the task of tending to soldiers’ graves. This task needs to be read in light of the maternal function that women were fulfilling. In performing this task, women were displaying the traditionally perceived “feminine” attributes of care, comfort, and compassion. As the war draw to an end the OWPA resolved to undertake the task of putting into order all the graves of the soldiers who had died since their return to New Zealand and were buried in Dunedin cemeteries.⁶⁰

It was not only the OWPA who saw the task of caring for graves as one that should fall on women. The government demonstrated their belief that such a task was women’s work when it appointed a woman, Miss Slatham, as the government appointee in charge of soldiers’ graves.⁶¹ In 1919 Miss Slatham met with the executive of the OWPA regarding the care of the soldiers’ graves in Dunedin. It was decided that as the OWPA would cease its’ operations in twelve to eighteen months, it was necessary to “make definite arrangements for the future”.⁶² It was finally resolved that the Women’s

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹1919 Annual Report of the Otago and Southland Women's Patriotic Association, p.11, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁶⁰ OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 24 July 1918, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum. It should be noted that the Imperial War Graves Commission meant that most of the men were buried overseas.

⁶¹OWPA Minute Book, October 1917-1920, 15 April 1919, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁶²Ibid.

National Reserve would be the Dominion organisation to carry out this work. The female government appointee, and the OWPA, reached a decision that women would carry out this function. To contemporary minds, this would have been the logical solution as the task was traditionally feminine and maternal in nature. Young girls were encouraged to take part in this activity through organisations such as the Girl Guides Association. In 1925 Girl Guide companies were taking turns at going to soldiers' cemeteries to place flowers on the graves.⁶³

HEROIC MATERNAL SACRIFICE

Motherhood was elevated to a parallel realm of heroism with active combat during World War I. Heroism was to be achieved by how much of a "supreme sacrifice" a woman was prepared to make, in other words how many sons she was to abandon to the imperial cause.⁶⁴ The figure of the patriotic mother was not something that was unique to World War I, in fact feminist theorists have identified its long tradition in western culture.⁶⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain has identified such a woman in Rousseau's retelling of a tale from Plutarch, *Emile*. Through this work Rousseau exemplifies his ideal of the female citizen: a Spartan woman whose five sons are killed in battle, but still thanks the gods for victory and "gladly" accepts the death of her sons.⁶⁶ It was around this classical notion that the patriotic New Zealand mother was constructed

⁶³GFS, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1925, p.7, ATL, 85-075-03/2. This task of the Girl Guides was reported in the Girls' Friendly Society's annual report.

⁶⁴C.Shute, "Heroines and Heroes: Sexual Mythology in Australia 1914-1918, J.Damousi and M.Lake (Eds.), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.24.

⁶⁵S.Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise her Boy to be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War", *Feminist Studies*, Vol.22, No.1, Spring, 1996, p.27.

⁶⁶Elshtain, pp.70-71.

during World War I. The patriotic mother's behaviour was characterised by obedience to the state, and a willingness to selflessly sacrifice her sons to the greater cause of the nation and empire.

The classical lineage of patriotic motherhood was not lost on contemporaries either; in a wartime address to the Mothers' Union, a Reverend spoke of the mothers of today resembling those of Spartan of old in their capacity for self-sacrifice.⁶⁷ Similarly, in an address to a meeting of women Lady Godley commended New Zealand women on the practical efforts that they had already made for the war effort. There was, however, according to Lady Godley, a greater effort that New Zealand women would have to partake in. This was identified as "part[ing] with those who were precious to them", but she was sure that this would be done with "courage".⁶⁸ Women were called on to make a sacrifice for the nation and the empire that was gendered. It was in their feminine capacity for sacrifice that women could serve king and country.

This theme of women's heroic sacrifice found expression in much of the verse that emerged during the war years. Through this medium women were reminded that the sacrifice that they were called to make was firmly grounded in their duty as mothers, and that this heroic maternal sacrifice was one that women throughout history had been called to make. The verse also explicitly stated the connection between this maternal sacrifice and the nation and empire. Women received the message that by willingly giving up their loved ones they too were working for the national and imperial cause. Verses three and four of *The Empire's Call*, an English verse by F.E. Weatherly encapsulated just that sentiment:

⁶⁷Christchurch Diocese: Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, 1912-1922, 23 November 1923.

⁶⁸undated, unsourced, "Women's World" by Imogen, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 3, 1913-1914, p.78.

Women of the Nation, mothers of the race,
 God knows what lies before you, what sorrow ye must face.
 But bravely ye will face it, in calmness ye will rest
 And give to this dear land of ours the men ye love best...
 As of old the women did, ye to-day will do;
 England and the Empire trusts her life to you⁶⁹

The classical lineage of the sacrifice also found expression in verse. In a verse entitled “socks” by Nina Murdoch women were reminded that, “there’s nothing left to do but hope and wait, And the seven tasks of Hercules would count as little compared with these.”⁷⁰ The courage needed for the sacrifice the women were called on to make was cast in language and imagery that was connected with heroism.

Mothers who were willing to suffer the loss of sons in the name of patriotism received public commendation. Unconsciously drawing on Rousseau’s idealisation of the women citizen, the *Otago Witness* published in 1915 a photo of a woman surrounded by the photos of four of her sons in uniform, all four of whom had been killed in the war. The accompanying caption proclaimed “A fine family record”.⁷¹ Women with sons at the front were singled out for special attention. An example of this was a “Mothers’ Union Social” that was held so that Lady Liverpool could meet with mothers who had sons were serving at the front.⁷² Afternoon teas were also regularly held for “soldiers’ mothers” at the Wellington Town Hall.⁷³

⁶⁹F.E.Weatherly, “The Empire’s Call”, first published in the *Daily Mail*, undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.19.

⁷⁰Nina Murdoch, “Socks”, undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.45a.

⁷¹Reproduced in L.Edmond (Ed.), *Women in Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell Their Story*, Wellington, Government Printing Office, 1986, p.24. See Figure 1.

⁷²undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.67a.

⁷³undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool’s Scrapbook, Volume 5, April 1917 - October 1917, p.31.

In recognition of the “courage” and “bravery” that New Zealand mothers were displaying, a badge was designed. Specially designed for the mothers of soldiers at the insistence of the Women’s National Reserve, the badge featured motifs of both national and imperial loyalty. Significantly it also featured words that recognised New Zealand women’s role as maternal citizens in the war effort. The New Zealand motif of two encircled fern leaves formed the shape of the badge that displayed the words “mothers of Empire” and the letters SS for the soldiers and the sailors. Linking the fern leaves at the top of the badge was the symbol of Empire; the silver crown. Lady Liverpool presented one group of women with badges at a soldiers mothers’ afternoon tea.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Ibid.



Figure 1. "A Fine Family Record."

Reproduced from L. Edmond, *Women and Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell Their Story*, Wellington, Government Printing Office, 1986, p. 24.

MORAL MOTHERS OF THE NATION AND WARTIME

Carmel Shute has argued in the Australian context that women's "battle" during World War I was also waged in the temperance bodies and the church societies.⁷⁵ This too was the case in New Zealand. The earlier campaign by women's organisations to recast male behaviour as controllable was continued and strengthened during the war years. The elevated status that women had promoted motherhood during the war years allowed them greater room for negotiation in their quest to morally purify the nation. The issues of temperance, the sexual threat that many believed the war had unleashed, and censorship, were at the fore of women's organisations' agendas.

Concerns were raised about the dangers that the drunken soldiers posed on city streets. With young men entering the army in their droves a new all male community was created. Women's organisations, with memories of frontier culture and its subsequent legends, became concerned how males would behave once away from the controlling influence of their mothers and wives.⁷⁶ As a means to counter this problem six o'clock closing of hotels was mooted. The Mothers' Union was supportive of this measure and campaigned for the implementation of the law. In 1915 the Christchurch branch unanimously passed a resolution for the restriction of licensing hours to between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm. Their stated reason for this was to "protect the young men who were undergoing military training."⁷⁷ The issue was again current in 1916 when the Christchurch branch received a telegram from Auckland stating that their council favoured a referendum on the matter. The Christchurch council resolved to telegraph a

⁷⁵Shute, p.34.

⁷⁶J.J.Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1987, p.182.

⁷⁷ Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1912-1922, 20 October 1915.

demand to Messrs Ward and Myers at once. It was clear from the meeting that most of the council members favoured the measure.⁷⁸ Likewise, the OWPA's decision that there would be "no liquor" at the peace celebration banquet needs to be read in light of New Zealand women's desire to morally purify the nation.⁷⁹

Likewise, World War I had served to make the moral decline of youth a widespread and intense concern. Instances of venereal disease increased markedly in the war years, and women's organisations feared that this would be countered by measures akin to the legislation they had spent over twenty years removing from the statute book. The War Regulations Bill of 1916 did nothing to quell this fear as the Governor was given wide ranging powers to suppress prostitution and curb the disease.⁸⁰ The campaign for the repeal the Contagious Diseases Act 1869 had left a legacy for many women of the belief that all legislation concerning venereal disease had been devised "in order to make vice more easy and safe for men."⁸¹ The WCTU demanded that the government instead look at the causes of venereal disease, which it considered to be immorality with venereal disease as a natural consequence. In 1916 the Society for the Protection of Women and Children organised a deputation to wait upon the Minister of Health. The subject of their concern was that adequate steps had not been taken to prevent the spread of Venereal Disease. They stated the case that women's organisations

⁷⁸ Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1912-1922, 29 August 1916.

⁷⁹ OWPA Minute Book, October 1917 - 1920, 6 March 1919, series nine, Jean Burt Papers, Archives Group 73, Otago Early Settlers Museum.

⁸⁰ D. Page, *The National Council of Women*, p.53.

⁸¹ R. Nicholls, *The Women's Parliament*, p.103.

did not approve with the proposals made in the war regulations, instead they considered them to be “inimical to the health and morals of the community.”⁸²

The *New Zealand Truth* may have labelled Ettie Rout a “social hygienist” in an article of 1915⁸³, but many women saw her in a completely different light. It was to Ettie Rout’s handing out of prophylactic kits and advice to New Zealand soldiers with which women took issue.⁸⁴ Her actions were in direct opposition to their ideal of male sexuality as controllable; abstinence rather than the regulation of vice. The WCTU saw Rout as making “vice” safe for the troops. An 1918 editorial in the *White Ribbon*, argued that the logical outcome of Rout’s campaign lay in the “creation of a class of women who are to be sacrificed to the lusts of men”.⁸⁵ Ettie Rout herself saw the situation in much simpler terms, asking the question: “Is sexual relationship a necessity for the troops or is it not?”, her answer, she said, came from the troops themselves: “Yes”. Given this she argued that there was a duty to make the relationship accessible and harmless, why, she asked, get into moral tangles?⁸⁶

The content of motion pictures was also challenged by women’s organisations during this period. For those concerned with the moral standards of the community picture shows came to be seen as harmful. Censorship was favoured by both the YWCA and the Mothers’ Union as a means to counter this moral danger. In 1915 the YWCA a

⁸²Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Wellington Branch, Annual Report 1915-1916, p.6, ATL, MS-Group-180, MSX 3292.

⁸³9 January 1915, *New Zealand Truth*, p.4, quoted in S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.306.

⁸⁴For an account of the life and contribution of Ettie Rout see: J.Tolerton, *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1992.

⁸⁵“The Maiden Tribute to the Modern Mars”, *White Ribbon*, February 1918, pp.1-2, quoted in Brookes(1993), p.152.

⁸⁶S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since they Won the Vote*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1993, p.306.

“Vigilance Committee” was formed by the Auckland YWCA. This committee reported back to the Mayor that films were “disgraceful” and that censorship was needed. More than this, however, they believed that women should be represented on censorship committees⁸⁷ This was based on the belief that as moral mothers of the nation it was women who could best raise the moral tone. Likewise, in 1915, the Mothers’ Union discussed the issue of picture shows. The efforts of a group of Catholic women in Timaru to have all pictures censored was applauded. The executive resolved to ask the government to “control picture shows”.⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

Whether as members of voluntary patriotic organisations, mothers of soldiers, or as moral mothers of the nation, New Zealand women participated in the war effort as maternal figures. Mrs Holland, Mayoress of Christchurch, and President of the Canterbury Branch of the Lady Liverpool Fund, summed up women’s war effort as “quieter and less showy” than men’s. Instead she argued that women’s contribution was based on self-sacrifice and labour.⁸⁹ It was through these traditionally feminine roles that New Zealand women were able consolidate the position of maternalism and motherhood as a political position from which to negotiate a place for themselves in the

⁸⁷S.Coney, *Every Girl: A social history of women and the YWCA in Auckland*, Auckland, YWCA, 1986, p.83.

⁸⁸Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1912-1922, 20 October 1915.

⁸⁹undated, unsourced, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 4, 1914-1915, p.118.

nation. It was during the war years that the connection between motherhood and the nation become well known.

CHAPTER FIVE

“OUR RAW PRODUCT IS GIRLS; OUR INTENTION IS TO MAKE BETTER GIRLS”: 1918-1925

It was concerns about the fitness of the race that led to women in their role as mothers to become even more integral to the nation and the empire. Women's organisations were central in the move to repair the race. Either as instructors in the skills of motherhood, upholders of social purity, or as facilitators of imperial immigration, women, through their organisations, were working for the “betterment” of the nation. Following World War I, nationalists and imperialists throughout the British Empire united to “repair the war wastage” of the “brightest and physically perfect” men who had perished in the war.¹ In New Zealand the war had served to debunk the myth of the “healthy country”. In the later stages of recruitment, 1916-1918, only 34 percent of conscripts were found to be completely fit. In addition to this 57.6 percent of these men were classified as “C2” or “D” in fitness and were rejected for overseas service. For contemporary New Zealanders who had previously extracted so much pride from the fitness of their race these figures were alarmingly near the 60 percent rejection rate of the British army during the South African War.²

¹P. Mein Smith, *Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880-1950*, London, MacMillan Press, 1997, p.63.

²M. Tennant, *Children's Health, The Nation's Wealth: A History of Children's Health Camps*, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books/Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1994, p.23.

MAKING MOTHERS

As argued earlier, organisations such as the Girl Guides, YWCA, and the Girls' Friendly Society, through their clubhouses, aimed to protect young girls from the vices of the streets by providing alternative spaces for them to spend their leisure time in. With these young women removed from the "immoral" streets and inside their clubhouses, these organisations set about teaching young women the skills needed for better motherhood with a new vigour. Voeltz has argued that in their English context the Girl Guides were used as a means of a middle class social control. He claims that this was especially true during World War I, when the movement was used to turn working class girls away from "flapperism". The end aim was efficient citizens and mothers for post-war Britain.³ So too was the case in New Zealand. As the physical health of New Zealanders came increasingly more important to the nation, women's organisations that were charged with the education of young girls and women became more integral to the nation.

In a 1922 summary of the Girl Peace Scout movement the stated aims of the movement are listed as "the training of girls in Home-craft, Mothercraft, and citizenship."⁴ Colonel Cossgrave was adamant that girls should look after their health and learn useful things such as how to cook and sew.⁵ This was an aim that remained firmly intact when the Girl Guides replaced the Girl Peace Scouts in 1924.⁶ Olave

³R.Voeltz, "The Antidote to 'Khaki Fever'? The Expansion of the British Girl Guides during the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.27, No.4, October 1992.

⁴The Girl Peace Scout Movement: A Summary, Girl Guides Association Papers, ATL, MS Papers 88-130-3/1(6).

⁵Record of the Girl Peace Scouts - Rotorua, 24 November 1914 - 22 July 1921, 2 October 1915, unsourced, 88-130-01/20.

⁶"The Guide as a National Asset", *The Dominion Girl Guide*, 1 February, 1926, p.5, 88-130-29.

Baden Powell saw the Girl Guide movement as developing the “womanly” attributes of the girl members. To this end she urged the study of homecraft and handicraft, so that the girls would become better homemakers, wives and mothers for the future.⁷ In a post war summary of the Girl Peace Scouts “the need” for the organisation is articulated in blatant terms. It states that in view of the “critical reconstruction times that our Empire is passing through it is especially important that up-to-date training should be provided for our rising citizenhood.” To the Girl Peace Scouts this “up-to-date training” was in the new skills required for scientific motherhood. The pamphlet states that the “revelations made recently by the Board of Health show the present deplorable condition of a great part of the young womanhood who are becoming the mothers of our rising generation in this dominion.”⁸ The first constitution of the movement⁹ states that the object of the Association is to develop good citizenship among girls and young women. The constitution goes on to define teaching them care of their own health, home nursing, and care and management of infants as integral to “good citizenship”.¹⁰

Whereas once it was the task of “mothers and aunts” to teach young women the skills needed for motherhood, it was organisations such as the Girl Guides who increasingly assumed this role in the early twentieth century. The Girl Guides Association saw the difference as being one of effectiveness. According to the *Dominion Girl Guide*, mothers and aunts had merely aimed their instruction at young

⁷Olave Baden Powell to Colonel Cossgrove, 18 November 1919, MS Papers 88-130-02/05.

⁸The Girl Peace Scouts: A New Zealand Movement for New Zealand Girls Copied by the Girl Guides and Spread all Over the World, undated, 88-130-02/04.

⁹undated, but archivist notes suggest possibly between 1920-24.

¹⁰First Constitution of the Girl Peace Scout Association, undated, 88-130-02/04.

girls, whereas the Girl Guides “shoot”.¹¹ Girls were encouraged to achieve a high level of skill in this area, through competitions such as the Townsend Home Nursing Shield. *The Scout Gazette* describes this competition as being open to any six girls of a troop over fourteen years of age.¹² Of the twelve questions occurring on the 1922-3 examination paper all pertained to the care of babies and infants. This exam ensured that the competitors, and Girl Peace Scouts in general, were familiar with Plunket methods of child rearing. Heavily influenced by Truby King’s insistence upon regularity, the exam questioned the candidates on things such as at what times during the day and night would you feed a sixteen month old child.¹³

So too were the YWCA eager that the young women of their organisation be familiar with the plunket methods, that when they decided at the 1921 Workers Conference “that a definite health campaign or propaganda” be organised “for girls and young women in the towns” it was to Truby King that they turned.¹⁴ Instead of organising its own campaign, it was decided in 1922 that the Association would “support and endorse Dr Truby King’s proposed campaign”.¹⁵ This co-operative venture proved to be a success, as in May of 1922 the Field Committee sent a “strong resolution of appreciation” to Truby King for the “splendid way he is co-operating with the Associations in their health campaign.”¹⁶ It was through women’s organisations such as the YWCA and the Girl Guides that young New Zealand women were instructed in the

¹¹“The Guide as a National Asset”, *The Dominion Girl Guide*, 1 February, 1926, p.5, 88-130-29.

¹²*The Scout Gazette*, 15 October 1921, p.173, GPS early records, 88-130-03/01, folder 6.

¹³Townsend Home Nursing Shield 1922-3 examination paper, GPS early records, 88-130-03/01, folder 6.

¹⁴26 October 1921, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

¹⁵4 February 1922, Ibid.

skills of the new scientific motherhood. Truby King and the Plunket Society may have received the public accolades, but it was women's organisations that worked to disseminate the Plunket message.

Following World War I the YWCA devoted its time more than ever to the production of better mothers, and through the production of better mothers, healthier babies for the nation and empire. Ever ready to explicitly articulate this view, Miss Owen stated in a 1923 address to the Field Committee of Australasia: "We have intrinsic motherhood in each of us; it develops so early in some. Our raw product is girls; our intention is to make better girls."¹⁷ In an attempt to achieve this the YWCA held classes in such activities as cookery, laundering, sewing, home-nursing, personal and sex hygiene, and child rearing. It was believed that practices and skills gained in classes would result in the more confident management of the home. According to the YWCA, this was crucial to the state, as the home was a unit of civic life, and if a woman could produce an efficient and well run home it would be a place of moral strength.¹⁸ It was through these traditionally "feminine" tasks that the YWCA saw that young women could best serve their nation. This view was blatantly articulated in a 1925 paper entitled "Service of Young Womanhood to the World today through Home and Family".¹⁹

The majority of the work of the YWCA was directed toward young women who had already achieved a certain level of independence from their families, but following

¹⁶25 May 1922, Ibid.

¹⁷The NZ National Field Committee YWCA of Australasia, Annual Meeting: Feb 22, 1923, p.6, YWCA Records, ATL, MS Group - 233, MS Papers - 1536-1/1/08.

¹⁸Miss Esther Anderson, "The Woman in the Home" delivered at the National Young Women's Christian Association of Australasia, Report of the 3rd Triennial Conference, Melbourne, 23-28 October 1913, p.67, 94-020-3.

¹⁹24 - 25 September 1925, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia, 22 March 1923- 26 June 1929, MSY-0857.

World War I there was an increased desire to become more involved in the “character” training of adolescent girls. During this period the YWCA started to recognise “the responsibility and special fitness” they had for the development of girls. The Association believed they had a large part to play in helping girls to “find a path”, for it was these girls “who are going to form the nation’s future”.²⁰

With this in mind, in 1923 the YWCA’s Hearth Fire Club, which had earlier been operational in Dunedin, Christchurch, and Auckland, gave way to the Girl Citizen Movement. A uniquely Australasian movement, The Girl Citizens had begun in Australia in 1920, and was introduced into New Zealand in 1923 at a YWCA conference in Melling, Lower Hutt. The Girl Citizen movement aimed to teach its members “good citizenship” and social awareness. Aged between fourteen and twenty years, the girl members could reach the ideal of the movement by following the “civic laws” of health, self-control, self-respect, knowledge, honour, co-operation, courage, and duty.²¹

The movement saw itself as a miniature League of Nations, translating the international moral and political problems of the day into the lives of the girl members.²² Although not as overtly domestic in orientation as the earlier Hearth Fire Club, the Girl Citizen Movement, at least according to one Otago publication, retained the same ideals of home-making, happiness, and service.²³ Simpson argues that while

²⁰The New Zealand National Field Committee, YWCA of Australasia, Annual Meeting, 22-24 February 1923, 24 February, p.3, MS Papers -1536-01/01/08.

²¹Poverty Bay YWCA, 3rd Annual Report, June 1924, p.8, MS Papers 1536-03/01/01.

²²S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since they Won the Vote*, Auckland, Penguin Books, 1993, p.136.

²³“Sixty Years of the YWCA in Dunedin”, undated, unsourced, YWCA Scrapbook 1899-1919, MSX 2951.

the Movement did not overtly push girls into marriage and motherhood, they were nonetheless steered in this direction. The vehicle for this steering which she cites is the handbook of the movement itself.²⁴ With the fundamentals of domestic skills retained from the earlier girls club, the Girl Citizen Movement represented the melding together in contemporary minds of maternalism and citizenship.

In addition to training women to be better mothers, there was also a heightened awareness in the post war era that there was a need create women who would be physically better able to bear healthy babies. In spelling out its methods to implement its self declared aims of the moral, intellectual, and physical development of girls, the Girl Peace Scouts method of training ran on “four main lines”. One of these was the acquisition of physical health and development.²⁵ The Girl Guides believed that in order achieve their fundamental aim of the development of motherhood and homecraft in young girls, that their “physique should be developed with more care than that of a man”.²⁶

From its inception, the YWCA also regarded physical development as one of the four cornerstones of ideal womanhood. As early as 1886 the Auckland branch had included gymnasium work. In the early years such work was contentious, with both the committee and the community. It was believed by some that physical exertion would impede a girl’s ability to later fulfil her role of motherhood through damage to the ovaries and breasts.²⁷ The growing alarm over “National Efficiency” was to change this.

²⁴*Girl Citizen's Handbook*, p.122, cited in Simpson, p.250.

²⁵“The Girl Peace Scouts: A New Zealand Movement of New Zealand Girls Copied by the Girl Guides and Spread all over the World”, 88-130-02/04.

²⁶“The Guide as a National Asset”, *The Dominion Girl Guide*, 1 February, 1926, p.5, 88-130-29.

²⁷S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.160.

In a letter of 1920 Mrs Kaye, the President of the Association, wrote of how the war had brought girls “into much greater prominence, and [had] shown how much more important they are than has hitherto been conceded.” She wrote of the great burden they now had to bear as the prospective mothers of a generation. She saw the YWCA, with its emphasis on the physical development of girls, as having received new impetus.²⁸ At the 1923 annual meeting of the New Zealand Field Committee it was decided that all associations should have a department of health and recreation.²⁹ It would appear that this decision was heeded by the local Associations, for example in 1925 the Poverty Bay YWCA was able to report that their “physical culture class” was “considerably bigger than last year”.³⁰ Also by 1925, this aspect of the Association’s work had developed to a point where an inter-house sports rally was organised for the girls’ of Auckland. Involving over three hundred girls this rally filled some with hope for the future, indeed it inspired one Auckland newspaper to note:

To see her [the sports girl] as she was at drill last evening, keen, alert, full of enthusiasm, was a real antidote to gloom, a heartening forecast of the evolution of the girl of today into the healthy wholesome physically and mentally fit woman of tomorrow.³¹

In the wake of the 1918 influenza epidemic, the YWCA’s devotion to the physical development of girls earned it some praise from one newspaper. In an article that links the strength of the nation to the physical fitness of its people, the YWCA’s work in the areas of hygiene and physical culture is cited as evidence of the need to keep

²⁸Mrs A. Kaye to unknown, 16 March 1920, YWCA Records, ATL, 1536-2/10/2D.

²⁹The New Zealand Field Committee YWCA of Australasia Annual Meeting, 24 February 1923, p.1.

³⁰Poverty Bay Young Women's Christian Association, Fourth Annual Report, 31 December 1925, p.9, ATL, MS Papers 1536-3/1/01.

³¹undated and unsourced, YWCA Records, ATL, MS Papers 1536-2/8/18.

the body in a healthy state to resist disease. The article states that of the girls resident in the YWCA hostel, few contracted the epidemic ,and if they did it was only in a mild form. Of the non-resident YWCA, those who attended the physical culture classes were reported to be “noticeably immune”.³² The YWCA, and the wider public, saw one of its key functions as producing girls who were of sound physical fitness.

The anxiety over the fitness of the race following the war not surprisingly led to a renewed interest in eugenics. While the work of the YWCA and the Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides had been intent on ensuring that the coming generations of the race would be physically healthy, there was also a desire that they would also be mentally healthy. In 1921 Miss Howlett delivered a paper to the Christchurch branch of the National Council of Women on the subject of “Training of the Feeble Minded”. Her thinking clearly inspired by eugenics, Miss Howlett argued that the “first duty of the state was to protect itself and the future generations from the danger of the feeble minded.”³³ If the Council could help bring about “a wise and efficient method” for the care of the feeble minded, according to Miss Howlett, it would be doing a great service for New Zealand.³⁴ The National Council of Women clearly saw that in ensuring the quality of the race they were performing a crucial task in the creation of the nation.

MORAL MOTHERS

In addition to working to ensure that the future mothers of the nation were physically and mentally healthy, women’s organisations continued their campaign to protect the moral health of the nation. For the members of the various women’s

³²“Physical Culture in Schools”, undated, unsourced, YWCA Scrapbook 1899-1919, MSX 2951.

³³National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922, 30 May 1921.

³⁴Ibid.

organisations, it was a case of protecting young women from the various bad influences and vices with which they might come into contact. With the period before adolescence coming more of a focus, as a crucial period of moral development, the work of women's organisations with youth received public applause from the community. Speaking to the 1919 annual meeting of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Canon Siggers, spoke of the period between puberty and adolescence as one where children had much leisure time which needed watching. The reason for this was that during this period children were tempted by "every vanity, folly, and vice".³⁵ It was to movements such as the Girl Guides that Siggers directed his praise for their work in protecting the young from these temptations.³⁶

The women of the organisations also saw their role as providing protection for youth through the provision of alternative spaces. In 1922 the YWCA invited Dr. Agnes Bennet to deliver a lecture on the subject of "The spread and far reaching influences of Venereal Diseases". In order to counter this problem, Bennet advocated as one measure that advertisements of the YWCA should be placed all over the city in every available place, and that community clubs should be started in all suburbs where girls and young men could meet openly and freely.³⁷ This address prompted the Field Committee to adopt a resolution that urged the New Zealand Associations to "consider their responsibility" in giving more publicity to the work that the association undertook in this area. The resolution also asked associations to consider whether they had fulfilled their "obligation" if they had not established community clubs in the suburbs where

³⁵28 May 1919, "Perils of the Streets", *Star*, YWCA, MS-Group, MSX 2951.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷24 August 1922, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia, 22 March 1923- 26 June 1929, MSY-0857.

boys and girls could meet.³⁸ The language of the response to Bennet's address clearly demonstrates that the YWCA firmly believed that it was their responsibility and obligation to provide space where young people could meet, but at the same time be shielded from the temptations that the streets of the cities offered. By establishing community clubs, it was hoped that the young people who utilised them would develop into morally healthy citizens.

One of the temptations that the women's organisations continued to target in this period was picture shows. In 1920 the Christchurch branch of the NCW resolved that some form of censorship should be exercised over the wording of cinema film advertisements.³⁹ In that same year the YWCA decided that they did not want to continue their practice of fund raising with picture show performances. Their reason was the "status of picture shows", the YWCA would not wish to be associated with something that was increasingly coming to be seen as a moral danger to the community.⁴⁰

For the women's organisations, the remedy to the problem that the shows presented was censorship. In September of 1920 the NCW received a letter from the Department of Internal Affairs advising that all shows in the future would be classed either "A" for adults only, or "U" for a universal showing.⁴¹ Censorship per se, while a step in the right direction, was not enough for the women's organisations. Instead they argued that a woman censor of pictures was needed to work in conjunction with Mr

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹31 May 1920, National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922.

⁴⁰16 July 1920, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

⁴¹1 September 1920, National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922.

Jolitte.⁴² This was an argument that was premised on the belief that it was women who were best suited to uphold and protect public morality. In April of 1921 the argument bore fruit when Mrs Atkinson was appointed to the Board of Appeal in connection with picture films.⁴³ It would appear that this move achieved what the women's organisations hoped that it would. In 1925 the SPWC noted that there had been "some improvement lately in the character of the pictures...shown in the city", however, still felt that there was room for improvement.⁴⁴

During this post war period, the state of working class housing also came under the spotlight of several women's organisations. It was not only the physical health risks that sub-standard or overcrowded housing presented that concerned the organisations, it was also the moral danger that was feared. In 1921 the Christchurch branch of the NCW expressed their concern at the overcrowded and insanitary conditions of many of the houses in Christchurch.⁴⁵ Likewise the YWCA discussed the issue in 1922. The national Field Committee proposed either on their own or in conjunction with other movements that a thorough survey of housing conditions in the cities be carried out. This survey was to pay special attention "to the housing of wage earning women".⁴⁶ The SPWC articulated their concerns in far more blatant terms in 1923. In a recommendation to the government the society stated:

⁴²7 March 1921, National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922.

⁴³25 April 1921, National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922.

⁴⁴Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Annual Report 1924-25, p.5, ATL, MSX 3293.

⁴⁵29 August 1921, National Council of Women, Christchurch Branch, Minutes 1917-May 1922.

⁴⁶3 February 1922, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

decent separate homes mean everything to the moral life of the people, and that if this preventative method is taken many thousand of pounds will be saved yearly in remedial work, and decency, morality, health, and happiness of the people will be improved and even better things assured.⁴⁷

In this statement there is a clear link between improved morality of people, and the good of the nation. Not only would money be saved each year, but there would be “even better things assured”.

IMMIGRATION AND THE MATERNAL FIGURE

Taking inspiration from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century Empire migration schemes, following World War I, Britain embarked on a renewed state-supported Empire Settlement scheme.⁴⁸ The genesis of the Empire Settlement Schemes of the 1920s lay in a pre-war Imperial conference. At the 1911 Imperial Conference a resolution was passed that resulted in the appointment of the Dominions Royal Commission in 1912. The object of this commission was to investigate the natural resources and trade of the Dominions, and to suggest methods of encouraging their development.⁴⁹ The commission, which comprised of six representatives from the United Kingdom, and one representative each from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland, delivered its report in 1917. Looking forward to the end of the war one of the main sections of the report dealt with empire migration. It recommended that following the war the land settlement schemes that the Dominion governments undertook for their own ex-service men should be extended to “those ex-

⁴⁷Society for the Protection of Women and Children, Annual Report 1922-23, p.8, ATL, MSX 3293.

⁴⁸S.Constantine, “Introduction: Empire migration and imperial harmony”, in S.Constantine (Ed.), *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990, p.2.

⁴⁹G.F.Plant, *Oversea Settlement: Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions*, London, New York, and Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1951, p.61.

service men who could be spared from the mother country". It also recommended that the migration levels of single women and children under the care of the state be increased.⁵⁰

There was, however according to Marriott, a barrier to overcome in order to achieve increased migration to the Dominions: the perceived natural immobility of people. Despite the high levels of migration from Britain in the nineteenth century, economist Adam Smith had found cause to note that "a man is of all sorts of luggage the most difficult to be transported".⁵¹ One of the first steps for increased immigration that the post-war British government embarked on was the establishment of the Oversea Settlement Committee in 1919. This committee was responsible for recommending policy to the Secretary of State and for the administration of government initiatives.⁵²

The first major responsibility of the Committee was the 1919 launch of the Imperial government's scheme for settling ex-service personal and their families in the dominions. This scheme, however, was only kept open until 1923 as it proved to be merely preliminary to the "more substantial statement of the Imperial government's new convictions", the 1922 Empire Settlement Act. This legislation authorised assisted passages and land settlement in the dominions for fifteen years, and allocated up to three million pounds each year to achieve this.⁵³ The legislation specifically targeted the groups of ex-service personal, agriculturists, and unmarried women.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Ibid,p.63.

⁵¹J.A.R. Marriott, *Empire Settlement*, London, Oxford University Press, 1927, p.15.

⁵²Constantine, "Introduction", p.4.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴D.Kennedy, "Empire Migration in Post-War Reconstruction: The Role of the Oversea Settlement Committee, 1919-1922", *Albion*, Vol.20, No.3, Fall 1988, pp.406-407, and Plant, pp.87-89.

In a memorandum drafted shortly after his appointment as Colonial under-secretary, Colonel Amery, identified the key groups to be targeted for assisted immigration. It was unmarried women who headed this list.⁵⁵ Post-war Britain had been left with “surplus” women, who were in Amery’s view wasted resources. He cited figures that women exceeded men in Britain by more than one million.⁵⁶ The solution, according to Amery, lay in the transportation of these women from “the centre of Empire” to the “peripheries”.⁵⁷ “Salvation” for these women was to found in the British colonies where there was still a perceived over-abundance of men. World War I had taught that the empire could not be taken for granted. Women were given the responsibility for “consolidation” of the empire, by insuring that the next generation of greater Britain would be British.⁵⁸

With this aim in mind, the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSBW) was established in 1919. The new society was an amalgamation of the already established British Women’s Emigration Association, The South African Colonization Society, the Colonial Intelligence League, and representatives of the Women’s War services. In 1920 the SOSBW was recognised as the Women’s Branch of the Oversea Settlement Department of the Colonial Office. The official incorporation signified a significant shift in control of emigration. From the late nineteenth century the enlarged British bureaucracy had begun to challenge the charitable organisations that had controlled emigration in the early and mid nineteenth century. The post-war period

⁵⁵Kennedy, pp406-407.

⁵⁶Ibid,p.407.

⁵⁷K.Pickles, “Exhibiting Canada: Empire, Migration and the 1928 English Schoolgirl tour”, unpublished paper, 1997, p.10.

⁵⁸B.Blakeley, “The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936”, *Albion*, Vol.20, No.3, Fall 1988, p.424.

provided the British state to, in Blakeley's words, "usurp" control of emigration. From the late 1910s onward the state was active in a concern that had previously been left largely to private initiative. The Treasury money that the SOSBW received was not received without a large pricetag. Now able to dictate the terms, Amery threatened the SOSBW in 1919 that unless representatives of the YWCA, Girls' Friendly Society, the Women's War Services, the Ministry of Labour, and the Women's Trade Council were included as representatives it would receive no Treasury money.⁵⁹ Amery's insistence on the involvement of the women's organisations was indicative of the fact that the care of young female immigrants in the colonies was viewed as women's work. It was the traditional feminine attributes of care and nurture that were required to assist the arriving women.

Britain had a "surplus" of women in both the reproductive and economic senses. Five months after the war, more than five hundred thousand British women were still receiving out-of-work benefits.⁶⁰ Despite, or exactly because of, the new skills that British women had learnt during the war years, it was the traditional occupation of domestic service that was targeted for immigration. This was mutually desirable for both the dominion and British governments. From the late nineteenth century there had existed a "servant problem" in the dominions. From this early date immigration was seen as an antidote to the problem.⁶¹ In 1899 a Mrs Fish had written a letter to the New Zealand YWCA asking them to help in remedying the problem of "scarcity of domestic

⁵⁹Ibid, pp.430-431.

⁶⁰J.Gothard, "'The healthy, wholesome British domestic girl': single female migration and the Empire Settlement Act, 1922-1930", in S.Constantine (Ed.), *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990, p.74.

⁶¹S.Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, p.224.

servants". This approach was only made after she had contacted Premier Seddon and received an emphatic "no" to her request for assistance for girls from "home" to emigrate.⁶² By the 1920s the lack of domestic servants in New Zealand was being described as a matter of "national importance". The Minister of Agriculture asserted that the total absence of domestic labour in the homes of the farmers was one important factor contributing to the decline in New Zealand's wheat production.⁶³

Britain itself was not immune to the domestic servant shortage either. Many argued that British women who had served during the war in well-paid and skilled occupations were not prepared to return to a life of "drudgery" following the armistice. Domestic service, however, in the dominions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand was presented in a completely different light. Life in the colonies was presented as a more egalitarian existence than at home. Rather than the specialised servant demanded at home, colonial mistresses demanded "generals". The role of this general was marketed as an assistant to the mistress and her daughters. If she were "a nice agreeable girl", the intending immigrant was told, she would live "very much as one of the family". The propaganda surrounding the campaign for increased single women's immigration attempted to raise the status of domestic work in the migrants perception.⁶⁴

A Cheap passage was the means that all the dominions used in an attempt to lure the young single women to their particular dominion. This was necessary as many of the women were without employment and it was their very lack of funds that made immigration an attractive prospect. It was the New Zealand government who offered the

⁶²16 November 1899, unsourced, YWCA Scrapbook, 1899-1919, MSX 2951.

⁶³Gothard,p.77.

⁶⁴Ibid,p.81.

most attractive passage to the women. As the furthestmost of the colonies trying to attract the women, New Zealand offered free passage and two pounds pocket money on arrival.⁶⁵ This was not enough, however, Canada, the closest to Britain of the competing colonies, attracted eighty percent of migrant domestics under the Empire Settlement Act, New Zealand was among the least popular destinations.⁶⁶

New Zealand's status as the least popular destination was not in anyway due to lack of enthusiasm among women's organisations in New Zealand to attract migrant girls. Early in 1920 Misses Girdler and Watkins of the SOSBW toured New Zealand as envoys of the British government, their task was to assess work opportunities for new women arrivals in the colony. In Auckland these two women met with the New Zealand Field Committee of the Australasian YWCA which offered to take responsibility for the welfare of immigrant women.⁶⁷ Not wishing to loose out to another organisation, as had nearly happened with the Girls' Friendly Society in 1913, the YWCA smartly entered into negotiations with the government to make the YWCA the "publicly recognised agents of the government". In an effort to achieve just that, Mrs Kaye, President of the YWCA, wrote to Prime Minister Massey, in March 1920 requesting the government provide the YWCA with funds to carry out such work. She also stipulated that the Association would only accept responsibility for the immigrants who had passed tests

⁶⁵Ibid,p.80.

⁶⁶Ibid,p.89 Eventually, in 1926 Australia and Canada followed suit, with free passage being offered to single women. For a fuller discussion of this see: K.Pickles, "'Surplus' British Women and the 1922 Empire Settlement Act", unpublished paper, 1997, p.7.

⁶⁷S.Coney, *Every Girl: A social history of women and the YWCA in Auckland*, Auckland, YWCA, 1987, p.101.

spoken of by Misses Girdler and Watkins, as this would give a reasonable guarantee that the girls were “of good character”.⁶⁸

After a personal assurance from Massey in March of 1920 that the YWCA proposal was receiving careful consideration and arrangements had been made for it to go before Cabinet⁶⁹, the government came back to Association with its terms in September of 1920. Thomson, the under-secretary of immigration, replied to the Association expressing his appreciation for their offer to promote “the welfare, [and] assist in the protection of...this class of immigrant”.⁷⁰ To receive the government funding the immigration under-secretary requested that the YWCA carry out several services for the new arrivals. As with the arrangement in 1913, they were to meet all the incoming boats and trains and accompany the domestics to the YWCA hostels, and providing temporary accommodation. The difference with the 1920 proposal was that all the government domestics taken to the hostels be granted one night’s accommodation at no charge. In return for this work the under-secretary proposed that the Association receive one hundred pounds more than the 1913 agreement, or two hundred and fifty pounds.⁷¹

It would seem that the sum proposed by Thomson was not to the liking of the YWCA. Later in September Mrs Dickinson replied to the government offer requesting a personal interview with the under-secretary. The Association felt that if it was to provide twenty-four hours free accommodation to the new arrivals one thousand pounds

⁶⁸Mrs A.Kaye to W.Massey, 13 March 1920, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁶⁹W.Massey to Mrs A.Kaye, 16 March 1920, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁷⁰Mr H.D.Thomson, Under-Secretary of Immigration to Mrs E.Dickinson, Acting Chairwoman of the Field Committee, 8 September 1920, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁷¹Ibid.

was needed.⁷² A few days later Thomson consented to the meeting and advised Mrs Dickinson that he would be in Auckland the following month.⁷³ By November of that year the department and the Association had agreed on a government subsidy of five hundred pounds per annum.⁷⁴ The support work that the YWCA offered to immigrants intended for domestic service was wholly financed by the government subsidy⁷⁵, that was shared out on a national basis.⁷⁶

In September of 1920 the first assisted immigrant domestic workers arrived in Wellington on the *Corinthic*.⁷⁷ As with their pre-war immigration work the YWCA saw one of its functions as providing the new arrivals with hostels, or places of protection. Women's organisations, such as the YWCA, as already discussed saw the streets of the cities as spaces that could lead to moral ruin. The arrival of the single women domestics was part of an imperial strategy to drive the economies of both Britain and the dominions, and to ensure that healthy babies of "British stock" were re/produced. The domestics charged with re/producing these babies for nation and empire had to morally as well as physically healthy. Women's organisations worked to ensure that this was the case, they demanded that the emigrating women "were of good character" and through their club system and hostels protected that character when in the dominions. With this

⁷²Mrs E.Dickinson to Mr H.D.Thomson, 21 September 1920, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁷³Mr H.D.Thomson to Mrs E.Dickinson, 29 September 1920, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁷⁴22 November 1920, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia, November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

⁷⁵Immigration Report, Wellington, New Zealand, 1 November 1923, p.2 YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁷⁶S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.101.

⁷⁷Ibid.

in mind the selection of women to run the hostels was of vital importance, it was respectable surrogate mothers who were sought after by the organisations. With this in mind the YWCA asked Miss Girdler, of the SOSBW, in March of 1920 to work in conjunction with the world's YWCA to send six women out to New Zealand for training in preparation for the immigration hostel work.⁷⁸ By September of that year six English women had been selected and were to come out to New Zealand as matrons.⁷⁹

As the official government agents, it would seem that the YWCA had a monopoly on immigration work with the arriving domestics. In New Zealand the Association worked directly with the government, and "had no contact with people at the British end".⁸⁰ The British YWCA noted this fact with some regret in 1919.⁸¹ The Girls' Friendly Society, shut out from government recognition, on the other hand were working to develop ties with their British counterparts during this period. In the post-war climate of increased importance on immigration the Society found that its immigration representative, Sister Dixon was unable to go out with the Port Health Officer to meet the boats as had been the case before the war. The Society felt that this was a huge loss as it was quite impossible to meet the girls once they have landed and part of the "great crowd that meets every ship on the wharf". Care was still able to offered to those girls who arrived in New Zealand with letters of commendation, but these were not the young women that the Society considered to be most at risk and in

⁷⁸22 March 1920, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia, November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

⁷⁹20 September 1920, Ibid.

⁸⁰Immigration Report, Wellington, New Zealand, 1 November 1923, p.1, YWCA Immigration Records, 1536-02/10/2D.

⁸¹The Young Women's Christian Association of Great Britain, Emigration Department Survey of 1919, p.5, 1536-02/10/2D.

need of their protection. The feeling was that the commended girls were the girls who were coming out to homes and positions already found for them. It was the girls who came out “on their own” that the Society felt to be most in need of their “guidance and [a] safe place for a few days or weeks”.⁸²

In Wellington alone the government arrangement with the YWCA demanded that fifty beds be kept for immigrant girls. The Girls’ Friendly Society admitted that with their present lodge they were unable to provide anything on this scale. What concerned them was that this was leading to girls ignoring their letters of welcome. The Society embarked on a campaign to raise its status with the immigrants. Firstly it initiated a new lodge fund “with the view to bring our lodge to the notice of intending immigrants”, and secondly they sought the help of “home members” by writing to London detailing the arrangements they had in place for meeting the society’s members.⁸³

Throughout the early 1920s the Girls’ Friendly Society worked hard to strengthen its ties with Britain. Personal correspondence between British and New Zealand members was applauded by the society as it was believed that this correspondence, with its personal touch, “made the link more interesting, and therefore of a more lasting nature”.⁸⁴ In 1925 Miss Way of the English Girls’ Friendly Society travelled throughout New Zealand in an attempt to promote unity between the two societies. She urged on the girls to become more interested in the Society’s magazine,

⁸²Girls’ Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1919-1920, pp.4-5, 85-75-03/02.

⁸³Girls’ Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1920-1921, pp.3-4, 85-75-03/02.

⁸⁴Girls’ Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1923, p.2, 85-75-03/02.

but this hope was not realised by an increase in subscriptions. Nevertheless in that year 1925 the Girls' Friendly Society could note that immigration work was increasing.⁸⁵

It was the YWCA, however, that was responsible for the majority of the single women immigrants arriving in New Zealand. During the peak period of assisted immigration, 1922-1926, tens of thousands of Britons streamed in to New Zealand. In the year ending 31 March 1921 alone ten thousand immigrants arrived on our shores. Making up only one category of British immigrants, domestics numbered on average six hundred arrivals a year.⁸⁶ Despite this there was still a lack of domestic servants in New Zealand. When applying to the New Zealand High Commission in London these women had to guarantee to stay in New Zealand for five years, and to stay in domestic service for at least twelve months of that period. They also had to supply the High Commissioner with a written undertaking not to marry for one year after arrival. In the hope of assisting women who were already knowledgeable in the skills of domestic service an intending immigrant also had to fill out a form which included such questions as: "Do you understand the care of children?" an "Can you make soups?, serve fish?, Entrees? Roasts? Sweets?".⁸⁷ It was these women that were needed in the colony, and these women who the government was specifically targeting. In December of 1920 it came to the YWCA's attention that it was being published in England that the New Zealand YWCA was prepared to provide twenty-four hours free accommodation to all immigrants coming out. Responding to this erroneous information the Association wrote to the Mr Thomson and requested that he communicate with the imperial

⁸⁵Girls' Friendly Society, Wellington Branch, Annual Report, 1925, pp.3-5, 85-75-03/02.

⁸⁶S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.102.

⁸⁷Ibid.

government and explain that the free accommodation only applied to the New Zealand government domestics.⁸⁸

Despite the preference in the Dominions for women trained in domestic service, the Oversea Settlement Committee failed to attract enough domestics to meet the demand in the Dominions. In an attempt to rectify this problem the idea of training women previously untrained in this work was mooted. Training, an important feature of pre-war women's migration societies, had earned applause in the 1917 Final Report of the Dominions Royal Commission. In the post-war era, however, the British government expressed a desire for the Dominions themselves to bear the financial burden of such a scheme.⁸⁹ In New Zealand it was the YWCA who provided this training. The Association purchased land in Awapuni with a view to establishing a hostel and farm for training young English women in domestic and farm work. The selection of the young women was left in the hands of those working in Britain. The British national YWCA in conjunction with the London advisory committee of the Debt to British Seaman Fund were responsible for selecting young women who fulfilled the criteria of excellent moral character, strong healthy and fit for country life, and aged between fifteen and eighteen years. The immigrants were to come to New Zealand under the control of the YWCA and be instructed in the tasks of domestic work, cooking, laundry, sewing, dairy work, milking, poultry, bee farming, and orchard work. The scheme provided for the women to stay at the hostel for six months, and after that to go out into either paid employment or marriage. At the outset of operations it was

⁸⁸20 December 1920, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

⁸⁹Gothard, pp.82-83.

intended to bring out twelve girls every three months, and then six girls every three months.⁹⁰

It was not only as domestics that New Zealanders demanded women immigrants from England. In 1921, in an effort to staff their mill, the Directors of the Woollen Milling Company in Kaiapoi sought young women from the milling towns of Britain. It is suggested by Simpson that the main obstacle to successful implementation of the plan was the lack of “suitable” accommodation in Kaiapoi for the women.⁹¹ As a solution to this problem the mill Directors bought and furnished a large house, however they did not consider they had sufficient expertise to administer such a venture. With this in mind the Directors turned to the YWCA with their experience in hostel work. As with all hostels of this type the Kaiapoi hostel provided to women immigrants a controlled environment that offered them protection from the streets. The hostel itself was equipped to house twenty girls, and had extensive grounds with tennis courts. The tennis courts were apparently only one part of the “rich and varied educational and recreational program” that the YWCA offered for the immigrant girls at the Kaiapoi hostel.⁹²

There was, however, some difficulty in enticing the girls to remain in Kaiapoi. According to Simpson, most of the English women left for places where there was a better rail system in place to transport them around, and to be closer to metropolitan life. Keeping the immigrant women on the task they had originally be brought to New Zealand to fulfil was not a problem unique to the Kaiapoi woollen mill. Women who came out as domestics were just as likely “to take the escape route into the factory”, or

⁹⁰“Land Girls”, 2 December 1925, Manawatu Evening Standard, MS Papers 1536-02/08/18.

⁹¹Christchurch Press, 23 August 1921, quoted in Simpson, p.229.

⁹²*Down the Years: A Record of the Past for the Women of the Present and the Future*, YWCA, 1964, p.7, MS Papers-1536-02/01/09.

marriage.⁹³ In fact some women did not even remain single for one year which earned disapproval from the YWCA. For the British women who had come out to the Colony as government domestics this meant that they broken their bond with the New Zealand government, and it was up to their new husbands to refund their passage money.⁹⁴ For their part, the New Zealand government did not seem as perturbed at such a situation as the YWCA. Minister for Immigration, Bell, stated:

that there is no law to prohibit girls of such good character, looks and physique as to attract the young men of the Dominion in search of wives; it may be unfortunate for the prospective employers, but it is probably just as good for the Dominion as if they went into Domestic Service.⁹⁵

In fact the desired outcome of the Awapuni farm scheme was that following their training the women would either go out to work or marry. These immigrant women would then become re/producers of the nation and the empire.

For the women of the organisations it was imperative that the immigrant women were “of good character”. The character of the arriving women was important as it was hoped that they would eventually be mothers of a future generation. Efforts were made to ensure that the women were of “good character”, but as early as 1921 the YWCA were voicing their concern at the “class of immigrant sent out”.⁹⁶ It would appear that this was not a concern isolated to a few women who served on the national Field Committee as the minutes note that “dissatisfaction [was] felt in many quarters”.⁹⁷ In response to this “problem” the Association resolved to “make a plea” to the SOSBW to

⁹³S.Coney, *Every Girl*, p.99.

⁹⁴Ibid, p.103.

⁹⁵Ibid, p.100.

⁹⁶23 June 1921, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

⁹⁷Ibid.

use their influence to raise the standard of the women being sent out. It was also decided that a committee should visit Mrs Massey, wife of the Prime Minister who had just returned from a trip to England where it was understood that she had “thoroughly looked into the question of immigration”.⁹⁸ The women of the YWCA would rather inculcate the young arrivals into the skills of modern motherhood than set about on moral recovery work. By 1922, the “problem” seemed to be solved. When Mr Thomson asked the Association for “an expression of opinion...as to their estimate of the behaviour and character of the girls sent out”, very favourable expressions were expressed.⁹⁹

GIRL PEACE SCOUTS, GIRL GUIDES, THE NATION, AND THE EMPIRE

Although a shift to a more national identity was detectable in women’s wartime organisations, for many of the organisations discussed in this thesis, the Empire was a central consideration. Organisations such as the Mothers’ Union and the Girls’ Friendly Society, while not explicitly imperial in their aims, nonetheless proved to be powerful vehicles of imperialism.¹⁰⁰ In an article that explores the Girls’ Friendly Society in their British context, Brian Harrison claims that the empire was that society’s first love.¹⁰¹ Certainly the 1926 history of the Girls’ Friendly Society supports this view. Referring back to a question that was asked in an earlier “history” of the organisation, Mary

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹4 February 1922, Minute Book of the Field Committee for New Zealand of the YWCA of Australasia November 1919-February 1923, MSY-0856.

¹⁰⁰J.M.MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990, p.158.

¹⁰¹B.Harrison, “For Church Queen and Family: The Girls’ Friendly Society 1874-1920”, *Past and Present*, No.61, November 1973, p.125.

Heath-Stubbs revisited the issue of whether or not the Girls' Friendly Society provided a link of empire. To provide an answer to this question, the author pointed to the spread of the society throughout the empire. She also points to the recent experience of World War I, "when the colonies responded so willingly to the call of the Society, as they rallied to the help of the Empire itself".¹⁰² Heath-Stubbs concluded by claiming that it was "service and sacrifice like these [the war effort] that form an indestructible link".¹⁰³ This work shows that to the women involved in the organisations, theirs was an imperial task. Organisations such as the YWCA also preached the imperial message. In a 1916 lecture Mrs S.M.Park delivered a lecture to the assembled girls entitled "Advantages of British Rule".¹⁰⁴ In this lecture the British system of governance was compared with other forms of rule, namely the American system of a democratic republic. Park painted the latter system to be rife with commercial fraud and corrupt administration. The lecture was concluded with a call for imperial unity.¹⁰⁵

It would, however, be too simplistic to claim that for all the organisations in this thesis the empire was the primary consideration. Although the transition from the New Zealand based Girl Peace Scouts to the British based Girl Guides Association is often presented as a smooth linear transfer, this was far from the case.¹⁰⁶ Instead what occurred was a contest between the New Zealand founders, and the imperial organisation, for control of the training of young New Zealand women and girls. An

¹⁰²Mary Heath-Stubbs, *Friendships Highway*, London, 1926,p.153, ATL, 85-075-02/16.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴May 1916, unsourced, YWCA Scrapbook 1899-1919, MSX 2951.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶see for example *S.Coney, Standing in the Sunshine*, who states that: "The Girl Guides, a British movement, officially begun in New Zealand in 1923, replacing the earlier Peace Scouts movement", p.136.

examination of this contest reveals a complex situation that was rooted not only in tensions between national and imperial loyalty, but also in the perceived role of women.

Following World War I, there was a determined and sustained campaign by the Girl Guides Association to have their organisation replace the Girl Peace Scouts that had been operational in New Zealand since 1908. It would seem that from this date, 1908, until 1919, there was no concern over the Peace Scouts' existence. In 1919, however, Annette Liverpool was contacted by a representative of the Girl Guides Association and offered the position of President of the New Zealand branch. Lady Liverpool agreed to this request, but warned the London administrators that her involvement would be minimal as Lord Liverpool's term was due to end in the near future.¹⁰⁷ The need for the British based organisation was articulated in terms of imperial unity. In a letter to Lady Liverpool, Olave Baden Powell spelt out the need for the Girl Guides in terms of the movement helping "to link up the girls of the Empire in far off places with the girls who were guides here in the mother country".¹⁰⁸ When Annette Liverpool and her husband left New Zealand, it was to the new Governor's wife, Lady Jellicoe, that the Girl Guides turned for support.

Soon after her arrival in the Dominion, Lady Jellicoe received correspondence from Olave Baden Powell that spelt out the difficulties that the Guides were experiencing in establishing their organisation in New Zealand, namely Colonel Cossgrave.¹⁰⁹ One again Olave Baden Powell sought to win the support of the Governor's wife by appealing to sentiments of imperial loyalty. In an earlier letter, Lady

¹⁰⁷Lady Liverpool to Mary Beauchamp, 18 August 1919, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹⁰⁸Olave Baden Powell to Lady Liverpool, December 1919, Lady Liverpool's Scrapbook, Volume 9, 1920-1921, p.3.

¹⁰⁹Olave Baden Powell to Lady Jellicoe, 28 August 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

Jellicoe had been informed that “it has been found that the movement [the Girl Guides] has been effective in bringing girls of British blood in closer union with each other through the link of a common name and common ideas and activities”.¹¹⁰

It was these ties of imperial loyalty that Olave Baden Powell lauded as one of the major functions of her organisation. To her, the Girl Guides simply ran along “with a happy link of sisterhood, yet with no hampering legal ties”.¹¹¹ It was, however, the Guides of the Empire who shared the closest relationship in her mind. Upon hearing that New Zealand girls were taking the same tenderfoot examination as British guides, Baden Powell wrote:

I cannot tell you how delighted I am to hear that you now have the same tenderfoot as the rest of the Empire. It brings us much closer together, and makes you more British in our minds - actual sisters in fact, instead of only “cousins” as the Americans are.¹¹²

Through this extract it is possible to see that imperial links were fundamental to Olave Baden Powell and her Girl Guides Association.

For Colonel Cossgrave, the retention of the name and the autonomy of the Girl Peace Scouts was a matter of national loyalty. Upon hearing of the Girl Guides’ attempts to establish their organisation in this country he wrote to Mary Beauchamp demanding to know why there was a desire to establish the British based Girl Guides in New Zealand when the Girl Peace Scouts already existed. Importantly for Cossgrave,

¹¹⁰Olave Baden Powell to Lady Jellicoe, 10 August 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹¹¹Olave Baden Powell to Miss Hodge, 21 July 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹¹²Olave Baden Powell to Miss Cracroft Wilson, 30 October 1922, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

his organisation had already received the recognition of the government and the unanimous support of the medical profession.¹¹³

To counter the Girl Guides campaign, the Girl Peace Scouts produced a pamphlet that explicitly articulated the reasons why their organisation was more suited to New Zealand than the Girl Guides. Entitled *The Girl Peace Scouts: A New Zealand Movement for New Zealand Girls Copied by the Girl Guides & Spread All Over The World*¹¹⁴, Cossgrove was making direct reference to the fact that his organisation had preceded the British Girl Guides by two years. In this pamphlet he places his movement firmly within the pioneering past of New Zealand, and the girl members of his organisation within the tradition of the pioneering woman stereotype.¹¹⁵ Through this pamphlet Cossgrove transmitted the message that:

New fields of work are cropping up for girls and it is imperative to capture and hold our girls and influences, and to give them opportunities of fitting themselves to take care of a home under difficult pioneering conditions of our back blocks or in the more settled districts and towns. Almost any colonial can teach the best English Guide a lot more about the practical side of real Scouting in New Zealand's undeveloped areas. It takes a New Zealander to carve out a home in the heart of our native bush and convert that roadless bush into a profitable farm and happy home.¹¹⁶

¹¹³Colonel Cossgrove to Mary Beauchamp, 25 August 1919, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01. It is interesting to note that it is significant to Cossgrove that the Girl Peace scouts had received the support of the medical profession. This shows that he was aware of the function that his organisation played in the production of healthy girls.

¹¹⁴"The Girl Peace Scouts: A New Zealand Movement for New Zealand Girls Copied by the Girl Guides & Spread All Over The World", undated (but text indicates that it was produced after WWI), ATL, 88-130-02/04.

¹¹⁵According to the masculine national myth the pioneer had been crucial to the making of New Zealand. According to the myth the pioneer slaved for long hours at back breaking toil to break in the new lands in the nineteenth century. The ability to engage in this work was combined with courage, strength and adaptive skills to constitute the image of the pioneer. Although this myth has long been identified as marginalising women it did however accord women a place. By the early twentieth century a body of literature was developing which celebrated "pioneering traits" in colonial women. As a "type" the pioneer woman displayed the virtues of patience, courage, and the ability to "manage", for further development of this point see: M.F.Knauf, "Service, Sacrifice, Suffering and Smiles: Images of New Zealand Pioneer Women 1850-1950", Research Essay, B.A(Hons) in history, University of Otago, 1993, and L.Wevers, "Pioneer into Feminist: Jane Mander's Heroines", in P.Bunkle and B.Hughs, *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland, Allen and Unwin, 1980.

¹¹⁶"The Girl Peace Scouts: A New Zealand Movement for New Zealand Girls Copied by the Girl Guides & Spread All Over The World", undated (but text indicates that it was produced after WWI), ATL, 88-130-02/04.

Cossgrove attempted to market his Girl Peace Scouts as an organisation that was more practical in orientation, and therefore of more use to New Zealand girls.

The contest for control of the movement in New Zealand was not confined to letter writing between Baden Powell, camp, and Cossgrove, in fact it reached high governmental levels. In a letter of 1920 Olave Baden Powell cited the charter the Girl Guide movement had been granted by the British government in 1915. This charter empowered the Guides to organise and manage the movement in any part of the British Empire.¹¹⁷ The fact the British government had granted this charter to a movement for girls demonstrates the Empire linking potential of the organisation was recognised by the government. The national implications of the retention of the New Zealand based Girl Peace Scouts were also recognised by the New Zealand government. When Prime Minister Massey was approached by supporters of the Girl Guides, he came out in favour of the Girl Peace scouts. His reasons were grounded in issues of national, rather than imperial, loyalty. He was strongly in favour of the Dominion name being kept as he “knows how keenly all colonials object to having English ideas foisted on to them when they are quite capable, in fact sometimes more capable, of creating their own.”¹¹⁸

The contest for control was not only grounded in a simple imperial versus national loyalties dichotomy. Operating on another level was a gendered issue. There was a concern amongst the proponents of the Girl Guide Movement that the Girl Peace Scouts was too “tomboyish” in nature. This was an allegation that Cossgrove hotly

¹¹⁷Olave Baden Powell to Lady Jellicoe, 28 August 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹¹⁸Celia MacDonald of the Isles to Olave Baden Powell, 29 June 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

denied: “not tomboys, but quiet dignified young women out on serious work”.¹¹⁹ Such language shows that Cossgrove was eager to fit the girls and young women of his movement firmly within prevailing accepted notions of femininity. The Girl Guide movement, however did not see this as the case. In a 1921 article in the *Girl Guide Gazette*, Robert Baden Powell sets out the reasons for the need for the Girl Guides, rather than the Girl Scouts, in terms of women’s function as maternal figures.¹²⁰

Setting his arguments in post war rhetoric Baden Powell starts by stating that: “today women have won for themselves a far greater share in the work of the world”. He then moves on to position the Girl Guides as crucial to the creation of young women who were most able to take on their “greater share of the work”: “the Girl Guide training is framed to prepare the younger generation for taking on this increased responsibility”. The crux of his argument, however, is that “their new activities will not so change their mentality that they forget they still have special powers and duties as women”. According to Baden Powell these powers and duties could be weakened by intrusion “into what is definitely men’s domain”, and this is where the British organisation saw the Girl Peace Scouts leading young New Zealand women with their tomboy activities.¹²¹ Baden Powell finishes off his argument by explicitly stating what the powers and duties of women were and why they were needed:

The home making and character giving abilities which are at one the privilege and responsibility of women are needed today more than ever, as are the tender sympathy, the patient pluck and the quiet dignity which helps a man and raises the standards of his chivalry.¹²²

¹¹⁹Colonel Cossgrove to Olave Baden Powell, February 1920, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹²⁰R.Baden Powell, extract of “Why Guide and not Girl Scout”, published in *Girl Guide Gazette*, October 1921, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

For many the need for the Girl Guides rather than the Girl Peace Scouts was crucial to the nation and the Empire. It was the skills, character traits, and attributes that Baden Powell outlined that were viewed as crucial to the survival of both the nation and the Empire in the years following World War I. While Cossgrove tried to paint a picture of an organisation set within the pioneering past of New Zealand, the Girl Guides seized on this and played on the fears that the public held concerning the birthrate. Women who knew their role, and were skilled in their role, as maternal citizens were increasingly important for the future, and the Girl Guides presented themselves as the movement that was best able to fulfil that function.

The supporters of the Girl Guide movement also found cause for concern over the fact that the leaders of the Girl Peace Scouts were male. Upon meeting Cossgrove in 1919, Cecilia O'Rourke presented him with a list of questions concerning his organisation. One of these was whether he intended to keep men commissioners? Cossgrove responded that he would prefer ladies, "but at present ladies of the leisure classes will not take it up."¹²³ This was to prove an enduring problem for the Girl Peace Scouts, in 1922 Cossgrove made Miss Cracroft Wilson¹²⁴ private secretary of the Girl Peace Scouts, and she noted upon her appointment that it was difficult to find ladies of the leisured classes to administer the movement.¹²⁵ This desire to have middle and upper

¹²³Cecilia O'Rourke to Olave Baden Powell, 16 December 1919, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹²⁴Miss Cracroft Wilson was actually working as somewhat of a "double agent". She was in regular correspondence with Olave Baden Powell keeping her up to date on the activities of the Girl Peace Scouts, and working for the establishment of the Girl Guides in New Zealand through such measures as distributing Girl Guide Association literature throughout the country. Cecilia O'Rourke to Olave Baden Powell, 17 August 1921, Miss F. Cracroft Wilson to Olave Baden Powell 26 August 1922, Olave Baden Powell to Miss F. Cracroft Wilson, 30 October 1922, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹²⁵Miss F. Cracroft Wilson to Olave Baden Powell 26 August 1922, Girl Guides

class women running the organisation was grounded in the belief that as superior moral beings it was the responsibility of these “respectable” women to not only raise the standard of men, but also of working class girls. The Girl Guides countered this “problem” by sending English ladies out to instruct and “advise” their colonial sisters.¹²⁶ Thus ensuring that it was “respectable” women who would be instructing the coming generation of women.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the British Empire, the aftermath of World War I resulted in renewed attention being focused on the British race. Hand in hand with this concern went motherhood, and hence women became even more central to the nation and the empire. Women’s organisations in New Zealand seized upon this opportunity, and set about producing girls and young women who were skilled in the new “science” of motherhood. It was women’s organisations that were dedicated to the task of producing young women who had not only acquired the skills of motherhood, but who were physically and morally healthy. These three components were crucial in the future mothers of the nation and the empire if superior specimens of the British race were going to be produced in New Zealand. The role of women’s organisations in this process, although ignored in the traditional historiography, was vital to the creation of New Zealand’s nationhood that was set firmly within an imperial paradigm.

Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

¹²⁶Olave Baden Powell to Miss F. Cracroft Wilson, 30 October 1922, Girl Guides Association, ATL, 88-130-03/01.

As concern over the state of the British race grew throughout the empire, female imperial immigration became crucial to postwar imperial and colonial identities.¹²⁷ It was on women's organisations, such as the YWCA, that the responsibility for the future re/producers of the nation and the empire rested. The women of these organisations fulfilled their traditional maternal function of care and nurture in providing protection and care for the arriving girls. The immigration schemes of the postwar period demonstrated how imperial networks were crucial in the reconstruction of the empire. These links were not confined to governmental levels alone. Through the case study of the Girl Guides/Girl Peace Scouts it is clear that the inculcation of young women was a highly political activity. In launching their attack on the Girl Peace Scouts, the Girl Guides appealed to popular sentiments. Firstly, they advocated an imperial wide organisation, secondly, they questioned whether the activities of the Girl Peace Scouts adequately equipped young women for the task of motherhood, and thirdly they advanced the argument that it was women, as moral mothers of the nation, who were the best suited to the production of mothers for the nation and the empire.

Whether as physical mothers of babies, educators of young women, or as surrogate mothers of newly arrived immigrant women, the women of the organisations were fulfilling traditional maternal roles. As these tasks were all crucial to how New Zealand was defining itself as a nation in the postwar period, women were able to carve out, and negotiate, a place for themselves in the creation of the New Zealand nation.

¹²⁷For a comparative example of the Canadian experience see: K.Pickles, "Exhibiting Canada".

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

WOMEN AND THE NATION

In their theoretical works on nationalism, men such as Hobsbawm and Gellner have made the observation that it is nationalisms that invent nations where they did not exist before.¹ In New Zealand it has been men who have traditionally been understood as the subjects of these nationalisms. In recent years scholars concerned with nationalism have begun to unpack the concept and have made some distinctions that are crucial to the study of women within nations. In 1991 Benedict Anderson coined his now often repeated phrase of nations as “imagined communities”.² He meant this in the sense that nations are systems of cultural representation where people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an imagined community.³ One year later, Hobsbawm noted the tensions that exist between the two main ways that the “nation” has been understood in modern times. On one hand there is the sovereign political identity, and on the other is the ethnic or linguistic grouping that implies a cultural identity. The implications of this distinction for a study of women within the nation are immense.

¹ E.J.Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.14; E.Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964, p.169.

² B.Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1991.

³ Ibid, pp.6-7.

While women have been excluded from making treaties and drafting legislation, they were critical actors in the formation of cultural identities.

New Zealand, as a colony that shared a common language and “stock” with the “mother country” found of necessity that markers of difference, other than language and ethnicity, had to be employed.⁴ As was the case in Australia a “national type” emerged as the subject of national imaginings. This “national type” was formulated simultaneously in opposition to, and as part of imperial rule. Further complicating the formulation was its relationship to the Australian “national type”. In a desire to establish markers of difference from Britain, a stereotype built on the pioneer experience was developed, but running against this was a desire on the part of New Zealand to distinguish itself from its larger Tasman neighbour. In order to achieve this a national identity that was set firmly with an imperial paradigm emerged. Fundamental to the concept of the New Zealand “national type” was race. It was through the production of healthy, egalitarian, and independent examples of the British race that New Zealanders found cause to celebrate their difference. Women were crucial actors in this cultural representation.

Although not popularly recognised as such, all nationalisms are gendered and all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender.⁵ In their introduction to the Special Issue of *Gender and History* on Gender, Nationalisms and National Identities the editors noted that in the contemporary and historical explorations of national identities, scant attention has been paid to gender difference. For these authors there has been too little

⁴ For a discussion of this in the Australian context see: M.Lake, “Women and Nation in Australia: The Politics of Representation”, *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.43, No.1, 1997, p.43.

⁵A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, New York, Routledge, 1995, pp.352-353.

analysis of nationalist movements and the formation of nation-states that is “gender conscious”.⁶ From a discussion of the diverse ways in which women from a variety of countries have used, and been used by, nationalist projects they arrive at the conclusion that the relationship between nationalism and feminism is full of “contradictory possibilities”.⁷

THE NATION AND THE EMPIRE

Writing of the Australian context, Luke Trainor, argues that by defining nationalism in masculine terms, such as the bushmen and sportsmen, women were cast as the “other”; the imperial sympathiser.⁸ As discussed in chapter one, New Zealand constructed a national identity within an imperial paradigm. For the women’s organisations discussed in this thesis, the issue of an imperial versus a national identity was a complex one. An imperial loyalty was evident through organisations such as the OWPA in its work to support the imperial war, however, as argued throughout the period 1914-1918, a shift to a more national based loyalty was evident. Likewise, the contest between the Girl Peace Scouts and the Girl Guides following World War I, demonstrated the complex relationship between national and imperial loyalty.

It was the Anglican church based Girls’ Friendly Society, and the Mothers’ Union who were especially loyal to empire. As discussed in chapter five, in the 1920s, the Girls’ Friendly Society, ran a determined campaign to ensure that the links between New Zealand and British branches of the society were strong. Likewise, the Mothers’

⁶ C.Hall, J.Lewis, K.McLelland, and J.Rendall, “Introduction”, *Gender, Nationalisms and National Identities, Special Issue, Gender and History*, Vol.5, No.2, Summer 1993, pp.159-164.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ L.Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, conflict and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.74.

Union were equally imperial in their outlook. In August of 1907 Mrs Julius, president of the Christchurch branch of the union, received a letter from the founder of the English organisation, Mrs Sumner. In this communication she expressed her wish that the word “empire” would replace the wording, “New Zealand”, on all cards, and leaflets that the New Zealand branches produced. The only obstacle that the committee saw as an impediment to this request was the large stock of cards and leaflets that they already had in supply.⁹ Early in 1912 this issue was once again before the executive of the union, and this time they assented to the English request.¹⁰ This was despite a clear demonstration only five months earlier that their independent identity was important to them. In September of 1911 the executive had received a letter from Mrs MacConnall, of the Queensland Mothers’ Union suggesting an opinion on a suggestion to form an Australasian Mothers’ Union. The opinion that the Christchurch union expressed was a resounding no!¹¹

Through their organisations, New Zealand women demonstrated that theirs was a complex relationship with imperial and national identities. On one hand, some of the organisations were eager to foster imperial ties, but equally on the other hand, there is clear evidence of a national loyalty in some of the organisations. This relationship with imperial and national loyalty needs to be read in the context of New Zealand’s often paradoxical juggling of imperial and national loyalties.

⁹ Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1913-1912, 29 August 1907.

¹⁰ Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1913-1912, 27 February 1912.

¹¹ Mothers’ Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1913-1912, 6 September 1911.

“POLITICAL” ACTIVITY AND THE MATERNAL FIGURE

In the introduction of this thesis I set up a definition of the “political” that moved beyond the traditional male defined sense of the word that has served to exclude the political activities and achievements of women. Largely drawing on the definition suggested by Paula Baker in the mid 1980s, a definition of the “political” that includes any action formal or informal, that is taken to affect the course of behaviour of the government or the community was established. When the activities and achievements of the eight women’s organisations examined in this thesis are appraised using this expanded definition, it becomes clear that the organisations were heavily involved in political activity. As moral mothers of the nation New Zealand Women embarked on a sustained campaign to “feminise” the standards of the nation. On issues such as alcohol consumption and sexual morality women’s organisations chipped away at male privilege, and worked to re-cast male behaviour as something that was not rampant and in need of indulgence, but as something that was controllable. So too were women an active political force in their instruction of young women in the skills needed for motherhood. The way in which women affected the course of behaviour of both the government and the community was crucial to an emerging national identity. As moral and physical mothers, women were active participants in the creation of the New Zealand nation.

Through adopting this expanded definition of politics the “public”/ “private” dichotomy that the doctrine of separate spheres establishes was challenged. Previously the nation was shown to be have been created in spaces that have traditionally been labelled the “private” sphere of women and therefore dismissed as not part of the process of nation building. This thesis has shown that critical elements of the nation

were constructed in spaces traditionally perceived as belonging to the “private” sphere; in spaces such as the clubrooms of the YWCA, the Girls’ Friendly Society, the Girl Peace Scouts/Girl Guides, and the Mothers’ Union.

While the binary opposition that the doctrine establishes has been shown to be analytically too simplistic in explaining women’s role in nation building, it was however a lived reality for the women who constituted the membership of the organisations examined in this thesis. In fact, it was from this very binary opposition of man/woman that the women’s organisations sourced their power. By emphasising, and at times exaggerating, their difference as *women*, the organisations found a space from which to negotiate their part in the creation of the nation. It was as women and armed with their perceived traditional maternal functions of care and nurture that women were able to affect the course of behaviour of the government, the community, and ultimately the nation. The women’s organisations examined in this thesis subverted the idea of the inferiority of the “private” sphere by sourcing their power to negotiate a place for themselves in the nation from it. This means that women’s contribution to the New Zealand nation has been on gendered terms, or as maternal figures.

THE MATERNAL FIGURE AND THE NATION

Through emphasising their difference as women, New Zealand women both constructed themselves as, and were constructed as maternal figures. The activities of the organisations examined in this thesis fall within what Miriam Dixon has labelled in her groundbreaking Australian feminist history in the 1970s as “domestic feminism”.¹² For the last twenty years, New Zealand women’s and feminist historians have made the

¹²M.Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788 To The Present*, Victoria, Penguin Books, 3rd edition, 1994, pp.223&250.

connection between this “domestic feminism”, as it was practised in New Zealand, and the advancement of women’s rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in reference to the winning of the vote.¹³

Philip Cohen has explored the connection between suffrage and nation building in the American context.¹⁴ Through his arguments, Cohen provides an interesting way to explore the connections between the “domestic” feminism of the women’s organisations and the New Zealand nation. In his American study he argues that the politics of the suffrage movement were nationalistic; the white leaders of the suffrage movement sought to further improve their position as women, by forming a “racist” alliance with white American men. In what Cohen argues was a subordination of the gender conflict the leaders advanced the cause of women’s suffrage while furthering the exclusion of non-white women and men.¹⁵ The aspect of his argument that provides a way to examine the New Zealand situation, is his contention that in order to convince the ruling men to vote for suffrage, suffrage leaders had to make the case that women’s votes were crucial to the nation they served.¹⁶

In New Zealand, women’s organisations made their case for the vote on the basis that they would morally purify the nation. This late nineteenth century strategy was an enduring one. This analysis of Cohen’s can be extended beyond just focusing on

¹³see for example: Grimshaw; R.Dalziel, “The Colonial Helpmeet: Women’s Role and the Vote in Nineteenth Century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.11, No.2, October 1977; P.Bunkle, “The Origin of the Women’s Movement in New Zealand: The Women’s Christian Temperance Movement 1885-1895”, in P.Bunkle and B.Hughes (Eds.), *Women in New Zealand Society*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1980; B.Brookes, “A Weakness for Strong Subjects: The Women’s Movement and Sexuality”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol.27, No.2, 1993.

¹⁴P.N.Cohen, “Nationalism and Suffrage: Gender Struggle in Nation-Building America”, *Signs*, Vol.21, No.3, 1996.

¹⁵*Ibid*,p.707.

¹⁶*Ibid*,pp.716-717.

suffrage to the wider, and subsequent, reform agenda of women's organisations in the New Zealand context. Throughout this thesis there are examples of women's organisations making the case that their demand for reform was crucial to the New Zealand nation. Such a strategy can be seen in campaigns such as the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, women censors, and restricted drinking hours.

RESPECTABILITY

Underlying the work of the women's organisations was the notion of respectability. The mode of respectability that the women's organisations promoted was a gendered mode of respectability. Women were promoted, and promoted themselves as, being able to convert men to a more respectable and morally pure life. Howe and Swain have argued that respectability in Australian terms came to be increasingly measured in relation to marriage and the family.¹⁷ So too in the New Zealand context did respectability come to be connected to family life. It was as wives and mothers that women could "lead their families in purity and holiness of life",¹⁸ and thus be respectable.

Respectability was a way of life that was understood to show proper respect for morals and morality.¹⁹ During the time period of this thesis there did exist some standard hallmarks of respectability: respectable people did not get drunk or behave wildly; they maintained a certain propriety of speech and decorum; they dressed tidily

¹⁷R. Howe and S. Swain, "Fertile Grounds for Divorce: Sexuality and Reproductive Imperatives" in K. Saunders and R. Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p.160.

¹⁸The object of the Mothers' Union stated that: "The object of the Union is to awaken in mothers of their great responsibility, as mothers, in the training of their boys and girls, who will be the future fathers and mothers of New Zealand...[and] to lead their families in purity and holiness of life", Mothers' Union Diocesan Executive Minutes, Christchurch Diocese, 1894-1903, 7 April 1894.

¹⁹G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolsen, 1971, p.257.

and kept their houses tidy; and were law abiding and good role models for the “lower” classes.²⁰ For those of the working classes savings, thrift, temperance, and self-control were also key components of respectability.²¹ It was the middle and upper classes who defined respectability, but those of the working classes were encouraged to strive to attain it.

Respectability was crucial to the middle class organisers of the women’s organisations and their organisations worked to produce girls of the working classes who were respectable. The second of the three objects of the Girls’ Friendly Society stated that it was an object of the Society “to encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, temperance and thrift.”²² Likewise, the Girl Peace Scouts also encouraged thrift in its girl members; the ninth “Scout Law” stated that “a scout is thrifty”.²³ The YWCA’s Girl Citizen movement of the 1920s incorporated self control and self respect into its civil laws.²⁴ These “virtues” that the women’s organisations were striving to impart on the young working class women members were all heavily grounded in contemporary beliefs about respectability. The middle class organisers were essentially producing working class women who conformed to a middle class mode of behaviour: respectability. By achieving this “goal” that their middle class mentors put before them, working class women were led to believe that they too could play a role in the creation of the New Zealand nation.

²⁰Ibid,p.261.

²¹P.Bailey, ““Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?”: Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability”, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 12, 1978-79, p.338.

²²“Ten Reasons for Supporting the Girls’ Friendly Society”, p.4, pamphlet, May 1904, CPL, 2 Arch 15, Holy Trinity Church, Avonside, Miscellaneous Records.

²³*Peace Scouting for Girls*, p.10.

RACE, SOCIAL PURITY AND RESPECTABILITY

Throughout the period 1906-1925, it was an expressed hope that the “stock” that the empire would be replenished with would be pure. Women’s organisations played a crucial role in the construction of a race that was pure in both the moral and racial senses. With a heavy strand of social purity running through most of the organisations discussed in this thesis, women were intent on creating a nation that was feminised; a nation where the male vices of alcohol, sexual permissiveness, and general crudeness were held in check, and re-cast as controllable. The concept of respectability was used as a means to transmit the ideas of social purity across the class divides, as “being respectable” was a concept that held currency amongst people at all levels of society during this period.

As instructors in the skills of motherhood, women’s organisations were working toward a racially pure nation through ensuring that the coming generations would be born of healthy mothers, and cared for by mothers skilled in the science of motherhood. Through their work in attracting young British girls to immigrate to New Zealand, women’s organisations were ensuring that New Zealand was peopled with British “stock”. Once the immigrant women were in the Colony the organisations worked to ensure that these future mothers virtue was protected and thus remain pure. The women of the organisations discussed in this thesis worked to ensure that New Zealand was a racially and morally pure nation.

²⁴Poverty Bay Young Women's Christian Association, Annual Report, June 1924, p.8, MS Papers-1536-3/1/01.

CONCLUSION

In the period 1906-1925, throughout the 'white Dominions', Women's health, bodies and sexuality came to be strongly linked to the health of the British race. In New Zealand, a constructed national identity of a "healthy country" made this linkage especially strong. As an integral, but often overlooked, component of a New Zealand national identity, women had a position from which to negotiate a place for themselves in the nation. From 1906 it was to the provision of welfare for women and children that women's organisations increasingly focused their energies and resources. In doing this, New Zealand women positioned themselves as central players in the growing preoccupation with the race. The maternal role of women offered them a place in the New Zealand nation. It was not only in their biological capacity to give birth to healthy New Zealanders that women found power, it was also in their wider maternal function. Increasingly, women's organisations turned their attention to producing both a society and mothers who were capable of the production of healthy citizens for the nation and the empire. In order to produce healthy citizens for the nation and the empire, traditional feminine and maternal functions of care and nurture were emphasised and promoted. New Zealand women, through their organisations, both positioned themselves, and were positioned, as re/producers of the nation and the empire.

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